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**Collaborating and Integrating the Arts in Urban Schools: A Case Study
of a Community Arts Organization, Center Stage Texas**

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**Collaborating and Integrating the Arts in Urban Schools: A Case Study
of a Community Arts Organization, Center Stage Texas**

by

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Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

December 2012

Dedication

To my Mom, Dad, Sister, and family, whose support is everlasting no matter what crazy endeavor I choose to undertake. To Colby, whose humor and unending encouragement inspires me to reach for my goals and flourish. And to my Mia, who motivates me to be an inspiration and reminds me to persevere no matter how great a challenge.

Acknowledgements

This study would not have been possible without the support of many people in my life. Thank you to Dr. Bolin, whose unyielding support carried me through this lengthy process with grace no matter what state I was in. To my reader, Dr. Adejumo, I am thankful for your many kind words, inspiring classes, and help editing my thesis. I want to recognize Dede Clark, the art director at kidsActing and Center Stage Texas, for being a friend, mentor, and inspiration. Many thanks to the staff at UT Elementary School who opened their doors and hearts to me and this research study. Thank you to my family whose eternal support helped me through this very trying time. And a special thanks to my Art Education graduate student buddies for providing so much encouragement throughout this life-changing process.

December 2012

Abstract

Collaborating and Integrating the Arts in Urban Schools: A Case Study of a Community Arts Organization, Center Stage Texas

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This research focused on the community arts organization, Center Stage Texas (CST), and its arts integration collaboration with an urban school in East Austin, Texas. Aspects of this organization's programming was studied to gain more knowledge about the essential components a community arts organization needs to consider when conducting a partnered, arts integrated project and how programming should be implemented in these particular school settings in order to achieve the greatest impact and success.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The recent down turn in the economy and emphasis on testing for accountability in core school subjects have resulted in major funding cutbacks in schools and the cancellation of many curricular programs. Norman (2009) states “the need for community-based arts programming has grown even stronger, as funding for first-line school-based arts programs continues to diminish” (p. 62). As a result, some schools cannot offer any arts classes, especially those in urban, low socioeconomic areas. According to *Improving America’s Schools Act of 1993* (1993), “Children in high-poverty schools exhibit great need; yet their schools appear unable, for the most part, to provide the enriching instruction and support those children need to succeed at a level equal to other students” (Title I – p. 3). Thus, the majority of this population of students is not being engaged in learning and able to make connections between school and life that energize other students to come to school and succeed: “Students are rushed through a basic curriculum designed for students with homogeneous learning styles without consideration of atypical learning styles. This leads to boredom, underachievement, and discipline problems” (Respress & Lutfi , 2006, p. 24). Community arts organizations can help fill this gap and assist schools in these areas in integrating students’ core curriculum to provide more arts opportunities. Integrative action within a community may be a strong key to overcoming the harsh economic deficits of the times, while continuing to motivate students to learn not only how to pass a test but comprehensive development of life skills.

This research study was focused on one community arts program in East Austin, Center Stage Texas (CST). CST is a nonprofit theater for children located in a traditionally low-socioeconomic neighborhood whose mission is “to provide a gathering place where young people from diverse backgrounds can each bring his or her own perspective and sensibilities to the creative process” (<http://www.centerstagetexas.com>). The CST program provides free arts opportunities to a community of under-served children, and collaborates with neighboring schools to support their already-established curricula with expanded and meaningful interdisciplinary arts experiences. Using knowledge gained from past research on community arts programs, arts organizations’ collaborations with schools, examples of the positive influence the arts have on under-served student populations, urban teachers’ success in helping their students achieve, arts integration in education, processes for integrating the arts, and how the arts benefit student learning, this study identified essential components a community arts program and school need to collaborate on in carrying out a successful interdisciplinary arts project. Utilizing these essential components as a guide, through this study I evaluated whether CST’s Arts Enrichment Program is helping to provide these elements of success in collaboration with UT Elementary School, located in Austin, Texas.

Central Research Question

This study focused on the following question: What are the most essential components of a successful collaboration between a community arts program and a

school with an urban population? How are these components demonstrated in Center Stage Texas' (CST) arts enrichment program at a school in East Austin, Texas?

Problem Statement

Urban schools in the United States are suffering from a lack of many things: lack of resources, lack of teacher and administration consistency, lack of support from the community, and lack of hope. Students at these schools suffer from

lower levels of competition from peers, less qualified and experienced teachers, narrower and less advanced course selection, more student turnover during the year, and students with many health and emotional problems related to poverty and to living in ghetto or barrio conditions. . . . [The] districts with high poverty, located in central cities, with high percentages of students with disabilities, or with high percentages of English language learners are more likely to have low graduation rates. (Orfield et al., 2004, p. 6)

America's current public education system does not offer enough curricular challenges to meet the needs of all students. "In schools where 90% or more of the enrollment were students of color, only 42% of all the freshmen advanced to grade 12" (Orfield et al., 2004, p. 6). This country cannot continue to ignore the appalling reality that educators at these schools are faced with every day. Schools are not meeting the needs of their students because "schools alone cannot ensure that all students reach high standards, particularly schools in high-poverty communities" (Title I – p. 14). "Worrying about whether or not children can ... complete standardized tests... or worrying about how to provide in-school breakfast, school lunch, and anti-violence programs—these are frequently the focal points that claim the primary attention of school administrators" (Rademaker, 2003, p. 15).

If utilized correctly, the arts can be the answer to meeting some of those needs.

According to the *Improving America's Schools Act of 1993* (1993),

- The arts are unique forms of knowledge and ways of knowing. They are essential elements in our children's development.
- The arts are an effective tool for promoting learning, developing problem-solving skills, encouraging team work, developing creativity, and understanding many different cultures.
- Arts education can invigorate schools by improving teacher performance and morale, involving parents and building bridges to other institutions.
- The arts involve many different modes of active learning, creating greater opportunities for teachers to engage students. (p. Title III – 9)

If schools promote and grow their art programs, the arts can produce affirmative results needed to combat inequalities and deficiencies in America's schools. Rabkin and Redmond (2006) point out that "low-performing students in these programs consistently defied teachers' expectations as they found pathways to success through the arts that had eluded them in conventional classrooms" (p. 61).

An increasing amount of research is available about community arts organizations offering enrichment programming and arts integration in schools (Appel, 2006; Cole, 2010; Gullatt, 2008; Norman, 2009; Panaritis, 1995; Rabkin & Redmond, 2006; Rademaker, 2003; Respress & Lufti, 2006; Stankiewicz, 2001). Norman (2009) states,

In the past, schools have been able to operate as self-sufficient entities, but cost cutting has forced them to focus on the 'core curriculum,' and leave education that involves sports and leisure, or the arts and humanities to others. Arts organizations and teaching artists play an important role in realizing well-rounded educational strategies, and they are at the forefront of providing arts instruction in many classrooms. (p. 62)

This collaborative approach is not attempted as often and, therefore, less research about it exists. This omission may be due to the limitations of time and resources the schools are already experiencing and focus on the core curriculum being tested: math and reading. External groups often struggle within a school because of the lack of knowledge about the complex political and social systems present in schools, as these outside organizations are not an integral part of that educational system. Whether because of administrative red tape, obscure scheduling, or distrust of outsiders, these organizations tend to be cut from school systems or have to modify their programming to take place separate from a school setting.

Motivations for Research

PERSONAL MOTIVATION

After beginning my experience as a teacher in the public school system, I quickly learned I needed two things: lessons my students personally connected with, so they became more motivated to learn, and support to make these lessons a reality. Teachers never have enough hands, time, or money to achieve the innovative learning experiences they would like to provide for their students. Within my first couple of years teaching elementary art, I had the opportunity to work with a community arts organization on a mural project that is still on exhibit in the cafeteria twelve years later. A community artist worked with me to develop a project that would expand my students' experience with art media, knowledge of their cultural history, and pride by having their artwork put on permanent display. I believe the impact this project made on my students and the school is an important piece missing in many learning environments. I happened on this

experience by chance through former colleagues, but I believe with more education about working in collaboration with community arts organizations, teachers in urban schools can provide more chances for their students. Noel (2010) confirms this, stating, “When a teacher takes the time to learn and recognize a community's funds of knowledge, that set of cultural and strategic skills, she can more effectively draw on those to create a culturally relevant classroom” (p. 1). I want to help provide interdisciplinary learning experiences in all students’ classes, in and outside their schools, to help inspire students to stay motivated to succeed in education and become life-long learners.

I am fortunate enough to be one of the first employees of CST, so it is a personal mission of mine that this organization continues to grow and succeed. I have developed curriculum and relationships with schools that have produced some wonderful performances and very pleased and engaged student performers. The growth of CST has inspired me to want to understand more about how to initiate and sustain such working collaborations with schools. This study tracked a new branch of programming that began in fall 2010 with two 1st grade and two 2nd grade homeroom classes at UT Elementary School in Austin, Texas. This research was designed not only to help create smooth starts for future programming at CST but also to help foster successful programming by other nonprofit arts organizations seeking to make a difference in children’s lives.

PROFESSIONAL MOTIVATION

This is a topic that needs more research: how can under-served, low-socioeconomic students prosper from their engagement with an interdisciplinary arts program that focuses on the excitement the arts provide, while at the same time

maintaining the curriculum standards of their school? Schools that have been positively influenced by these programs tend to be private schools, magnet schools, and campuses with affluent populations. Teaching to the whole learner and helping students understand the connection of their lives to the surrounding world motivates any child and is especially needed for underserved, minority students struggling to get to school, much less pass tests. The arts offer advantages to a school and its students that are consistently underappreciated and underutilized. If urban schools and community arts programs in these areas are to survive, much less succeed, they need to reform their views on how students learn and who should be involved in the education of its community's children. A community arts program and a school can both benefit by what the other has to offer through efforts of collaboration. My study focused on understanding what is needed for this school and community arts relationship to thrive. With the arts at the helm of positive change and recognition, a school "can enable students to broaden their perspectives, to overcome the taken-for-granted, and to envision a better world" (Medina, 2009, p. 60).

Because successful teachers in these harsh urban environments tend to suffer from "burn out," training and interventions should be rethought and reformed. I struggled as a young teacher trying to learn in staff development sessions, bored and aggravated by my time being wasted with strategies that did not make a difference in my daily success.

Schutz (2006) confirms:

Urban school systems... start to resemble patchworks of partially digested and often contradicting reform efforts... this mix has been complicated by strict testing regimes that tend to narrow and simplify the curriculum, focusing teachers on helping students to pass the tests instead of learning complex material, and leading many good teachers to leave the field. (p. 701)

Until I was prepared to teach in a proactive way by linking art to other subjects, creating opportunities for my students' voice in their education and keeping learning active, I increasingly became as unmotivated as my students. It is important for future success of urban schools to understand the difference inspired, well-prepared teachers can make in a campus in-need, and how to facilitate this change in the learning environment. I believe community arts organizations are a resource that can help support teachers; this resource has not yet been utilized to its full potential in schools. Norman asserts "across the nation, informal arts programs fill gaps in neighborhoods, schools, and communities where cosmopolitan culture and excess, collide with poverty, want, discrimination, and invisibility" (p. 62). Teachers in urban schools, new teachers especially, struggle with organizing significant and effective lessons due to the lack of resources, time, and expertise. A community arts program could provide the assistance needed for teachers to more fully develop their lessons and fill the gaps in order for students to experience learning in more meaningful ways: "The best arts integration programs are developing a strategy that is helping to close the achievement gap even as it makes schools happier places. These programs' successes demonstrate that this strategy is within reach of most schools, even those in the poorest communities" (Rabkin & Redmond, 2006, p. 63). No matter where an educator teaches, who would not want or need support like that?

Research Method

This research centered on a descriptive, case study about the non-profit community arts organization, Center Stage Texas (CST). While providing background

information about the organization and the services it provides, this research centered on how CST implements a new program to teach arts enrichment classes at UT Elementary, a school in Austin, Texas. Using the model CST had established previously at another elementary school, I worked with two 2nd grade classes and two 1st grade classes as a community artist educator. The project culminated with a student performance at the theater. CST provided resources needed to complete this project including trained teaching artists, an accompanist, technical theater professionals, costumes, and resources for the students to make part of their own costumes. We collaborated to develop relevant arts programming that coincided with the school's curriculum goals, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for theater, art, and music, and CST's mission. Data was collected using interviews and questionnaires of teacher participants, student participants, and parents of the students at two different time periods: one before the program began and one after the culminating performance. This program was conducted on a semester-long time table that began in the fall of the 2010-2011 school year. Pre-program interviews with teachers were conducted in November and post-program interviews with teachers were conducted and questionnaires given to students and parents in May. I also kept an observational journal as a teaching artist in this study, to record reflections about student participation and teacher associations throughout the program.

Definition of Terms

arts integration: a method of teaching where the fine arts and traditional school subjects are combined into a congruent lesson or unit of learning.

Center Stage Texas (CST): a nonprofit theatre for children that offers free arts enrichment programming to under-served kids in east Austin.
<http://www.centerstagetexas.com>

community arts program: often a non-profit organization that offers free or reduced cost arts classes taught by professionals and open to a particular group of people sometimes limited to particular populations in a neighborhood, age group, or religious affiliation.

Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL) Program: a federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. It provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day. The program was established under the National School Lunch Act, signed by President Harry Truman in 1946.
(<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/lunch>)

interdisciplinary arts program: combining or involving two or more academic disciplines or fields of study including at least one fine art in a program independent from or in conjunction with regular classroom instruction.

nonprofit organization: an organization established without the intent of making a profit.

urban school: a school that is located and whose students live in a part of a city that consists predominantly of minorities from working class and low-socioeconomic families.

Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted at one school, the UT Charter Elementary School in Austin, Texas. I had already established a relationship with this school during the previous year by instituting a theatre arts enrichment class at the school, an after-school program for a group of 3rd-5th grade students. Plans to extend CST's arts programming at UT Elementary were discussed and agreed upon during the 2009-2010 school year, to offer in-class art opportunities during the 2010-2011 school year. The principal and CEO at the UT Charter School value the arts and CST's role in bringing more arts opportunities to their campus, making this an appropriate school to include in my research. This study engaged two grade levels, four classes, and four teachers. Philip Panaritis stated in *Beyond Brainstorming: Planning a Successful Interdisciplinary Program* (1995), "Interdisciplinary education is . . . a complicated, holistic, developmental, interactive, and inherently imprecise process for which there is no exact blueprint" (p. 624). Thus, my plan was to keep the number of alternative processes as low as possible while still having enough data to work with. I also limited the time frame of the bulk of this research to only one semester of programming, during the spring of 2011.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to expand the discussion about the importance of the arts in urban schools, specifically the affect the research I conducted on the community arts organization Center Stage Texas (CST) and its program collaboration with UT Elementary School. There is a need for intervention by community arts

organizations in schools and “those making curriculum decisions about ways to enhance student academic gain will find the arts to be a research-based mechanism with which to provide assistance and enhancement for achieving increased student academic success” (Gullatt, 2008, p. 13). My experience as an art teacher in an urban area working with an underprivileged, minority students and an after-school arts enrichment instructor in a for-profit arts organization opened my eyes to the disparity and need for the balance the arts offer. While collaboration between community arts organizations and schools can be a challenge, I want to contribute research-based data and analysis in order to offer more opportunities for these relationships to be successful. I have conducted a qualitative case study about the collaborative arts program and the two organizations involved. This consists of interviews and questionnaires of the participants including the students, parents, teachers, and administration at UT Elementary School, and my personal journal as the observer-researcher and director of the program. Although there are always limitations to every study, the program I conducted was helpful in providing further research to support an established list of aspects necessary to carry out a successful community/school arts collaborative partnership.

Preview for the Following Chapters

In the following chapter, I discuss and analyze current research conducted on community arts organizations, arts integration in schools, and urban education and the arts. Chapter Three explains the history behind the community arts organization I am working with, Center Stage Texas, and its parent organization, kidsActing, as well

background information on the school I worked with, UT Elementary School. Chapter Four lays out the data I collected sequentially. This chapter follows the story of the program from pre-planning interviews, all through the student involvement and classes at UT Elementary with my personal teaching journal, past the finale performance with my post-program questionnaires and interviews. In Chapter Five, I have examined lists of characteristics from other research about planning a collaboration to analyze the successfulness of this program and spell out how other arts organizations can use these essential components in order to build a successful collaboration with an urban school. Chapter Six completes my research study by reviewing the previous chapters, drawing the analysis and insight from the study, and highlighting future research directions related to this subject.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

In this chapter, I present literature that lays the groundwork for exploring the necessary components for a community arts organization and what is needed in order for an urban school partnership to succeed. The literature review for this study was focused on four areas: (a) community arts programs, (b) arts integration and interdisciplinary arts education programs, (c) issues related to urban education, and (d) teaching artists. Making use of this information helped my research become well-rounded while at the same time remaining grounded within a focused range of subject matter pertinent to this study.

Community Arts Programs

It is necessary to investigate various case studies about community arts programs in order to become more familiar with the research that has already been conducted on this topic. Doing so enables me to learn how other community organizations have structured their school/community partnership programs. There have been many successful and unsuccessful attempts by community arts organizations to develop their own characteristics for what they needed in order to be successful. By compiling these characteristics into a list of the most mentioned and important qualities, I used them in this study to evaluate the effectiveness of Center Stage Texas' arts enrichment program.

Massey and Szente in *Building Partnerships to Prepare Teachers for Urban Schools* (2007) describe a collaborative teaching program between Houghton College

students in education, The King Center Charter School, Americorps, and a refugee settlement group called Journey's End. The ideas they believe are important for collaborations in all educational settings are, (a) awareness of the unique strengths of individual urban schools, (b) know the other community programs associated with the school, (c) secure experience with other service-learning opportunities, (d) gain as many funding resources as possible, and (e) have "strong and dedicated leaders" (2007, p. 141).

In a similar way, Linnea Rademaker discusses the influence of a community arts groups, specifically Arts Collaborators, Incorporated (ACI), on schools and their communities in *Community Involvement in Arts Education: A Case Study* (2003). Rademaker argues that without common goals and definitions about what art education is and how it should be studied, advocacy for the arts can become "so vague as to be unfocused and changeable to go along with the advocacy research of the moment" (p. 17). From interviews, Rademaker compiled six reasons why ACI board members believed arts education necessary for inclusion in K-12 students' education. These include involvement, self-expression, expression of our culture, learned appreciation, part of a core curriculum, and as a self confidence builder (pp. 17-18). She delves deeper into ATI's structure by studying their initiatives and making further recommendations for other arts groups according to how successful these initiatives are in creating arts knowledge and experience for all students they serve. Her final suggestions for schools working with outside arts organizations are to consult with art educators in order to understand what art opportunities are needed at a particular school, "create programs that offer 'freedom of choice' for students," "consider art education as [a] basic ... planned

part of the school arts program,” “use the expertise of arts educators when designing curriculum or programs,” and “concentrate on public relations for arts education” (p. 23). Her final conclusion is one of the primary reasons why I chose to conduct this study, thus I carried out this research keeping in mind Rademaker’s (2003) perspectives:

As the incidence of outside influences working with arts educators increases, due to economic factors and other aspects of our society, it behooves us as educators to prepare ourselves to guide them properly. Critical analysis of both the organization, as well as the efforts that are offered in the name of arts education, is crucial to ensure that any efforts are well-constructed, feasible, and socially beneficial for all students. (pp. 23-24)

A case study conducted by Lee Ann Norman titled “Resources for Effectiveness: Collaborative Arts Partnerships in Schools” (2009) is an engaging look into the same sort of collaboration I attempted in my study. Norman believes, as I do, that,

now more than ever schools, teaching artists, and cultural workers must find common ground that allows them to share their practices. Through partnerships that draw on all of the resources within a geographic or cultural area, different kinds of knowledge and experience are shared, and communities are enriched by the exchange. (p. 62)

Continuing, Norman expresses that this article

provides valuable insight into how arts partnerships can contribute to building a democratic learning community in which students, teachers, cultural workers, and artists are able to redefine their roles and obtain an alternative sense of community by expanding boundaries and definitions. (p. 62)

Two reasons Norman gives for why arts integration was successful at the Multicultural Arts School (MAS) are , (a) teachers were required to incorporate two arts-integrated units into their curriculum and, (b) they were given a choice whether to work with an in-school art specialist or hire an expert from the community. They were also presented with an *Arts Integration Handbook* to work from in order to help facilitate

positive collaboration. Not only were they given guidelines and resources, but an organized orientation was built-in including observations, planning time, and an established introduction time period so the teaching artist could meet and become more comfortable with their students. During the study, Norman's most challenging hurdles were combining the lofty ideals of the outside arts organization with the practicality the teachers had for the rough home-life situations wherein most of their students lived. The teachers were not completely sold on the whole plan and therefore the collaboration suffered. Norman (2009) continued:

Our educational settings are diverse and complex places that lack continuity across them for a variety of reasons, but allowing an outside entity to become part of the school community through partnership is a process that requires time, patience, vision, and a willingness to resist the status quo in ways that open up access to resources and experiences for all. (p. 66)

Continuing with this subject, Katherine Strand found four major themes emerging from her research on integrating arts curricula and education organizations described in *The Heart and the Journey: Case Studies of Collaboration for Art Integrated Curricula* (2006). These four themes were: the philosophical mission, learning goals, relationships, and process over product (p. 38). Strand believes, as I do that,

the value of arts integration lies in its great potential to help learners experience learning as a holistic endeavor that connects their personal feelings with intellectual and physical skill development and helps them anticipate learning challenges with joy. (p. 39)

Adopting the goals Strand outlined, emphasizing the "creative process of brainstorming, discussion, visualization, creation, and creative play" (p. 40), while keeping in mind the "school[']s] goals...reinforced by reading and writing, reflection and

collaboration, along with grade-level goals for training recall and analysis” (p. 40), has strengthened my research, collaborative relationship with the participant teachers, CST’s arts enrichment program, and, perhaps most importantly, the children’s experience in this program.

Arts Integration in Schools

I found it helpful for my research to become acquainted with studies about integrating the arts within a school, not just successes and failures of outside organizations. Because a community arts program can be looked upon as a stranger by the personnel in a school, I want to know what motivates arts integration, whether connecting subjects between fellow staff members, connecting subjects within a classroom, or why integrating the arts into other fields of education is important at all.

Elliot Eisner is one of the most influential scholars writing prolifically about the importance of integrating the arts in education, so his work was a beneficial place to start. The article “What Education Can Learn from the Arts” written in the journal *Art Education* (2009) is a lecture Eisner gave explaining 10 lessons educators can learn from the arts. His examples include the importance of understanding nuances, the limits of language, how surprise can be a reward, the relationship between content and form, and the exercise of imagination.

As an art educator it is easy for me to embrace these ideas, yet I was disappointed that his article lacked quantitative data to support his claims. It does contain valuable quotes that aid my argument about why the arts are necessary, why a more integrated

approach to teaching should be sought after by all educators, and why this model would be beneficial for all students' education.

Another champion of arts integration, J. Ulbricht, explains eloquently why arts integration has become more widely debated in recent years in his article "Arts Integration Reconsidered" (1998). He states, "The world is becoming more interdependent. As economies, technologies, and populations of the world expand, new problems are created that require multidisciplinary solutions" (p. 13). Ulbricht gives a historical overview of arts integration in education including the work of John Dewey and his Laboratory School, the Teachers College Lincoln School, Viktor Lowenfeld, and the Central Midwest Research Educational Laboratory. Ulbricht also includes eight "guidelines for interdisciplinary arts education" (p. 16): art as its own subject, integration that enhances each connecting subject, curriculum developed around "social and personal issues" (p. 16), focus on large themes, use of a variety of artistic resources, authenticity, collaboration, and flexibility. These helped me compile my own list of most significant qualities found in school and community arts collaborations.

In the article "In the Arts Spotlight," Hotvedt (2001) spells out her own personal experience as a teacher who engages at-risk students and uses the arts to inspire student learning in her classroom. She describes lessons she felt were successful in motivating her students to be more engaged in their learning. She also explains a study she conducted on reading comprehension and using the arts to assist in student success.

Her examples are interesting and engaging, but she does not offer research-based data about how her examples stack up to previous attempts at the same lessons. I use her

examples as inspiration for my own instruction, but as far as research value is concerned this was an interesting story, but lacking in quantitative substance.

Krug and Cohen-Evron (2000) review philosophical foundation supporting the integration of curricula and the arts, and in particular the negative effects of “knowledge fragmentation” (p. 260). In “Curriculum Integration Positions and Practices in Art Education,” the authors explain the fundamental differences between the terms interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary curriculum, and integrated learning. Krug and Cohen-Evron continue to identify four ways educators can integrate the arts in their classrooms without sacrificing the integrity of the discipline: using the arts as resources for other disciplines, enlarging organizing centers through the arts, interpreting subjects, ideas, or themes through the arts, and understanding life-centered issues. Within each of these suggestions, the authors provide a description of the ideas, theories behind effectiveness, and examples of how these notions can be practically applied in the classroom or school.

The ideas presented in this article are definitely in line with my arguments for interdisciplinary school-models that stress the arts. I think the authors have provided sufficient examples and historical background to support their theories. I appreciate how they included the negative effects of dividing learning into separate disciplines as well as suggestions on how to incorporate the disciplines successfully.

I found an abundance of research supporting the integration of arts in education. In this body of literature the article “Art Teachers as Leaders of Authentic Art Integration” by Smilan and Miraglia (2009) directs attention to this issue, discussing how integrated art should be taught and who should teach it. They emphasize that a trained art

educator is the most qualified individual to teach art in schools, but they should strive to become the creative leaders on their campuses promoting, initiating, and staying involved in all interdisciplinary art curricula. Smilan and Miraglia explain the difference between the terms “integrated, interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and cross-disciplinary” versus “Authentic Arts Integration (AAI)” (p. 40). They discuss arts integration in terms of administrative support, the art educator’s role, and recommendations for future success. They even suggest the AAI leader be a separate position from the art teacher and serve the school in the same leadership capacity as would a reading specialist.

Smilan and Miraglia (2009) have many concrete arguments to support a trained art educator’s role in how the arts are integrated into schools. I think this is vital to the field of arts integration in education. Without this type of scholarly defense of knowledgeable training in art education, art teachers’ positions could become threatened. I agree that art educators should step up and become the creative leaders on their campuses, thus I used Smilan and Miraglia’s research to support this study.

Panataris’ (1995) article identified the main aspects needed in planning a successful interdisciplinary program. He discusses the advantages and disadvantages of these programs and how not all models fit well in any particular school. He laid out the main characteristics of successful programs, indicating where they should focus their attention when planning and implementing reforms: time, resources, incentives, talented and committed teachers, and flexibility and patience. He discusses the inherent nature of each of these characteristics and the approaches that schools and teachers should take, depending on the nature of the program: school-wide, team, or class. He explains his

position behind these types of reform as a risk worth taking and powerful but demanding for the educators putting these programs into practice.

This article was a wonderful resource and thoroughly explains how and what a school needs to possess in order to successfully implement an interdisciplinary program. From my experience, I hypothesized that the main aspects elaborated on here are the important areas not given enough attention when programs fail. The extensiveness of Panataris' advice on each of the necessary characteristics of a successful program and what happens when these pieces are not given enough attention would be invaluable to a school or teacher preparing to attempt a big project such as implementing a true school-wide interdisciplinary model. This article helped me immensely during the implementation and analysis of my project.

Urban Education and the Arts

Although numerous studies have shown the arts to be valuable and necessary in schools, there are few settings more challenging than those implemented in an urban neighborhood. There are so many obstacles a family and school must overcome in this environment to fully educate a child that their perceived need for the arts is often relegated to the end in a long list of necessities. Therefore, it is valuable to understand the positive and negative attempts at supplementing the arts in curriculums for students in these tough, inner-city communities in order to acquire a more complete grasp on the characteristics needed for the CST program and this study of it to succeed.

Holloway and Krensky (2001) describe the arts as integral to the overall development of youth in order to become well-rounded, compassionate, civilized beings, able to connect to others and their world. They offer several studies to show positive impacts the arts have made on disadvantaged students and continue with examples of various schools and community programs that offer these opportunities to students in areas of need. Holloway and Krensky explain the different sectors in art education- community-based, feminist, empathic, critical, and multicultural- and in which ways each of these forms of art education contribute to the field.

The authors offer a number of historical arguments about why the arts are important, which are very relevant to advocating for the importance of my research question. They use several valuable resources on urban art education as support for their arguments, which are in line with my views. For this reason, I found their work affirming that I had encountered the articles they were discussing and it helped their exchange hit home.

Lasky's (2009) article contains a brief overview of the political position of art education in light of President Obama's inauguration and in the wake of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation. She discusses the need for community partnerships in art education and what the museum can provide with object-based learning. She emphasizes the museums' abilities to promote social and sensory learning, engaging students in the mind and body unlike much of their current learning in the classroom.

This article discusses interdisciplinary learning, but is done so within the context of what a museum can offer to learners. While this is valuable to the field, the lens that

integration is examined through in this writing was not as helpful to my study about a community arts program collaborating with an urban school as someone researching the need to bring urban student populations to museums. In her writing, Lasky could have strengthened the connection to why learning from actual objects will help urban students in particular, or she could have developed the topic to suggest how to facilitate making this proposal a reality in urban schools. I also do not think digital initiatives conflict with object-based learning so much that we need to emphasize one over the other.

Medina (2009) discusses the situation in urban schools as a system that is robbing students of their chance to understand their positions in the world enough to provide them with hope and imagination. She believes integrating as many art experiences as possible into their curricula is a way to combat this problem for positive social change. She explains Freire's Bank Approach theory and Maxine Greene and Susan Stinson's description of aesthetic experience in education that refer to what urban students are missing in their education. She goes on to explain different approaches, or lack thereof, the City of New York and the federal government have attempted to equalize arts education in public schools. She discusses how most attempts have failed and will continue to do so because the people in these governing positions do not want those who are oppressed to comprehend their situations and retaliate against those with power.

I think the theories Medina presents are important to understand in reference to urban education, but she mostly summarizes other people's work. Most of her argument is based on Maxine Greene's lectures on aesthetics and their importance to the field of art

education, with a modest amount of her own ideas. This is a good secondary resource that guided me to the research of her primary resources.

In “Losing Our Future: How Minority Youth are Being Left Behind by the Graduation Rate Crisis,” the authors from The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, The Urban Institute, Advocates for Children of New York, and The Civil Society Institute (Orfield, et al. (2004) present statistics on graduation rates in America. The study includes specific state information and some data about large cities in reference to how minority dropout rates are sorely misrepresented. They assert that this inaccurate accounting of graduation numbers happens because the penalties schools, districts or states will endure because of these high rates of attrition. The numbers are purposefully manipulated to look better and tend to be published far lower than what actually occurs. This group found a way to calculate a more accurate depiction called the Cumulative Promotion Index (CPI). Even if discrepancies are found, they describe “soft systems” (p. 12) in particular states that do not have strong systems of accountability to implement improvement.

I found the information about urban schools being in more distress than commonly known valuable for my argument. Graduation rates are the most measured indication of a school system’s success. Because all schools in a vertical team are held to these standards, information on how a high school is performing is directly related to the lower grade schools that feed into it. I think this study could be more helpful if it investigated more than thirteen states. It would also be useful to view the statistics of

these graduation rates when compared to those of the students who were involved in the arts.

To facilitate comprehension of the state of the Ford Foundation's National Arts Education initiative "to address issues of equity and access in arts education," Spilka and Long (2009) begin by presenting an overview of the state of art education in urban schools. They go on to discuss how successful initiatives have involved collaborative relationships between non-profit arts organizations and public schools but tend to be restricted to certain schools and limited in funding while equality is still not achieved. They summarize the Ford Foundation's project to grant funds to nine different arts organizations in order to make the collaboration between their group and public schools stronger and begin the process of getting arts education to more numerous and diverse populations of students. They highlight the evaluation process each arts organization has progressed through in order to measure their success at this point of the study and spell out their findings in general and specific examples.

This article presented useful data on urban education and the statistics on the lack of art education in schools. While the examples describing the arts organizations are not particularly helpful, the "tips" generated for success were useful to my position as Education Director of CST.

Conclusion

This chapter acquainted the reader with literature that exists in relation to my research of the community arts organization Center Stage Texas and its alliance with a school. Expanding on my knowledge of other community arts organizations and the programs they offer their constituents helped me become more knowledgeable about case studies concerning this subject and the research already in existence. Most of the literature I reviewed about arts integration in education solidified my stance on its importance. It also made me aware there is a great need for the expansion of these projects in schools and more support of these alliances with neighboring nonprofit community arts organizations. According to most of the articles I examined, developing more arts opportunities for children in low-socioeconomic, urban schools will improve their chances for success on standardized tests and education as a whole, although this field of study needs more research reinforced by quantitative results and more successful case studies. The following chapter provides a historical look at CST, the nonprofit arts organization investigated in this study, and its current programming at The University of Texas Elementary School in Austin, Texas.

CHAPTER THREE: THE CENTER STAGE TEXAS ARTS ENRICHMENT PROGRAM AT UT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the three organizations on which this study is focused: (a) kidsActing, the founding for-profit organization of CST; (b) Center Stage Texas, the sponsoring nonprofit organization of the program examined in this study; (c) and the in-school enrichment program at UT Elementary School. This discussion includes a look into the history and development of the organization, its current standing, and connections that occur between each of these three organizations.

A History of kidsActing and the Birth of Center Stage Texas

Dede Clark began the organization kidsActing in 1980 after working with a friend's nonprofit production company that offered children's acting classes. She enjoyed the classes but believed the people in charge of the organization were not developing the childrens' skills effectively and the participants did not seem to be appropriately engaged in the classes. It was from this experience that she began to develop her philosophy of teaching. Dede decided to teach acting classes for children that would be fun and inviting, while also preparing them to act. It was important to her that the sole focus of her classes was never to strictly train students to become professional actors. While she believed some professional ideals are good to learn, she wanted the children to have a grand experience where they could walk away with an appreciation for the theater no matter how big a role they played in the final production. Her friend's nonprofit production company quickly fizzled while Dede's classes continued to grow and thrive.

As kidsActing grew, so did its exposure in Austin as a premiere children's theatre arts center. *The Velveteen Rabbit*, kidsActing's first original, summer musical production, opened in 1986 and sold out every show. This show became a significant milestone for the company, not only because the amount of publicity it created for kidsActing, but its popularity help spread the word that kidsActing was offering this kind of program for children in Austin. Its class enrollment numbers exploded the next year. In fact, for many years a number of other major theatre production companies in Austin shunned the idea of having children's classes as part of their theater programs. This has changed over the years and now there are several companies that teach theatre arts for children in Austin and the Central Texas area.

The nonprofit branch of kidsActing, Center Stage Texas (CST), was born when the very successful production of *The Velveteen Rabbit* was invited to travel to Russia. Dede quickly realized that this would be a great opportunity to spread the news about the benefits of children's theatre, but the newborn CST did not have enough money to take the whole production on the trip to Russia. Instead, CST invited the students from the Leningrad Children's Theater to come to Austin. They collaborated on a mini-version of *The Velveteen Rabbit* with the Russian students, kidsActing students, as well as an east Austin dance troupe. They also collaborated in producing a mural project on the outside of the Krueger Jewelry building.

The success of this endeavor was short-lived, however, as the non-profit branch of CST began to crumble; circumstances both inside and outside the troupe and organization brought about the near end of CST. This circumstance led to difficult decisions for Dede and she was forced to make a choice: give up her company and find a job where she did not play such an important role, or expand kidsActing, hire help, and put the nonprofit organization aside until the for-profit endeavor was a success. So, Dede went with her heart, hired help, and started classes closer to where she lived in order to make it more convenient and keep the organization alive. This began the kidsActing satellite location model while CST was put on a shelf.

The structure for kidsActing developed into an organization offering classes at satellite locations closer to where people live in order to make it convenient for children to participate in after-school classes. This arrangement has been so successful that kidsActing now has 12 satellite locations, 10 teachers in the fall and spring semesters and 30 in the summer months, including a facilities manager, a locations manager, and an office manager. kidsActing also employs staff for the technical positions involved in the children's productions, including a set designer, stage manager, costume designers, and light & sound designers and operators.

I began working for Dede Clark in 2003. I was then a full-time art teacher at a public school and looking for additional income. kidsActing sounded like a fun and worthwhile way to earn some money, but I had never choreographed a full-scale musical. My first production was *Annie*. From previous experience I knew that show like the back of my hand, so I did not anticipate any production problems. Well, that was a mistake! I did not know about Dede's philosophy to include as many children as possible in the production, thus giving them all a chance to shine. This meant three casts in one production with over fifty children involved. I taught at kidsActing only on Saturdays, but this quickly changed. I eventually became the choreographer and was responsible for all of the dances in four shows a year, with participants ages 7-19.

I was becoming disheartened with the public school system and my never-ending battle with hard-to-reach kids. I worked at two schools in East Austin with low-socioeconomic populations for nine years and I was exhausted. I had become a better teacher and was inspired by the challenge, but I needed a change. Dede offered me the chance to train under her to direct kidsActing, so I thought it would be a great opportunity to have a job I enjoyed while furthering my education.

The Reinvention of CST

At about the same time fate stepped in. The sad news was delivered the summer of 2007 that kidsActing's lease was not going to be renewed and a pharmacy was planned for the land where kidsActing and the adjacent restaurant had resided for many years. kidsActing was to become homeless. The opportunity to rent a theater in east Austin became available when a production company we were renting a stage from for a kidsActing satellite group's production was evicted a month before the performance. It was impossible to find an appropriate theater space in that short amount of time, so Dede negotiated to rent the space from the owner. Seeing that kidsActing was homeless, the owner offered to continue renting to us even after the show run was complete. This not only gave kidsActing a home, but was a great opportunity to reintroduce the nonprofit branch of kidsActing, CST.

Dede leaned on the kidsActing "family" to help launch the newly restored nonprofit to benefit children of the East Austin neighborhood, where CST now resides. The theater was renovated. This included adding a dance rehearsal room and a larger audience seating area. The first production opened in the summer of 2008. The CST board was established, which was comprised of kidsActing parents that believed in Dede's vision of CST and wanted children, who did not have the financial means, to enjoy the same great experiences as their own: acting, singing and dancing in kidsActing productions and camps. Some successful fundraisers were launched and a mission statement developed. CST was ready to start its first classes; all that was needed were kids to teach.

Campbell Elementary school was located within walking distance of CST. The school's principal was a former colleague; I had taught art at Campbell from 1998-2001. I had even been the art teacher of the principal's daughter for three years. We discussed how CST was so conveniently located to the school and how this could be used for the advantage of CST and Campbell Elementary School. We established a plan to have after-school classes that would progress in levels. The first after-school CST class started at Campbell in the fall of 2008 along with in-school theatre enrichment classes once a week in all kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade classes. These became CST's first arts enrichment programs and the catalyst for the program that exists today.

Center Stage Texas Now

Center Stage Texas is situated in the heart of East Austin, one block north of Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard just east of downtown Austin and The University of Texas at Austin campus. The area surrounding the theater is comprised of a hospice, the Flatbed Press, the UT COOP storage facility, the new Austin Metro station, Redeemer Lutheran Church, Campbell Elementary school, and neighborhood homes. Most residents have either lived in the neighborhood for many years or are relatively young and quite new to the area. Gentrification is a problem in this area due to the proximity to downtown and The University of Texas. Many of the students that attend Campbell Elementary either live with grandparents or in apartment complexes within walking distance of the school. It is a "neighborhood school," which means there are few to no school buses and all students have to arrange a ride or walk to the campus each day. There is also a

resurgence of local businesses including restaurants and coffee shops springing up just off a nearby, busy thorough fare. This location is another block north of the theater, bringing more revitalization to the area while pushing older businesses out. Even with the new developments in the area, CST serves a diverse base of young artists, ages 3 to 19, with 95% from minority populations, including predominantly African American and Hispanic students, with 95% of the student population listed as economically disadvantaged

(http://archive.austinisd.org/schools/docs/ratings_2008_2009/227901111.pdf).

CST's mission is to provide opportunities and a place for young people from diverse backgrounds to enrich themselves and find a broader community through the arts. Our conceptual programming goals include the following: nurturing a child's overall development; building awareness, self esteem and self discipline; challenging the students to articulate and express creative thought; encouraging resourceful problem solving and task completion; developing an appreciation of cultural, ethnic and artistic diversity; and celebrating the vibrant world of the arts. The board's goal for CST is for it to become a thriving community arts center where children from throughout Austin feel safe to express themselves creatively.

CST Arts Enrichment Programming

CST has established outreach programs that consist of after-school enrichment classes in theatre, visual arts and dance, as well as in-class experiences for kindergarten, 1st and 2nd graders at Campbell Elementary and UT Elementary. In offering hands-on arts

experiences, CST Arts Enrichment Programs build lifelong skills that enrich the lives of Austin's underserved youth and their families. The program began with one after-school theater class with 12 students from Campbell Elementary School. Three years later, CST provides arts enrichment to 430 students in three schools per semester.

Newer programs at CST have been established to offer classes to more diverse populations in need of artistic opportunities. In conjunction with the Head Start Program, CST conducts classes at True Light Daycare for 3-4 year olds, where these children travel to CST once a week for creative theater classes on the stage. The Give a Voice Program is newly established residency for students 10-18 years old with disabilities.

CST has received numerous grants from foundations such as the Glimmer of Hope Foundation and the Lola Wright Foundation, and government agencies such as the Texas Commission on the Arts and the City of Austin Cultural Arts Division. Some funding is attained through the Prime Time Grant by way of the Austin Independent School District after-school programs and donations from generous friends and families of kidsActing past and present students. I am fortunate to be the education director and community outreach coordinator at CST.

The University of Texas Elementary School

UT Elementary is a charter, "research-based demonstration school" operated by The University of Texas at Austin. It has an "open-enrollment campus, free to students" that live in a set boundary on the east central side of Austin. Students are admitted on a lottery-based system after filling out an application. Students are also accepted,

depending on availability due to a set amount of 20 students per class per grade level.

Now in its eighth year of operation, UT Elementary has 275 students, pK-5th grade students, largely of color and economically disadvantaged.

(<http://www.utelementary.org>)

The University of Texas Elementary School's mission is:

- (1) To develop students into lifelong learners through rigorous, research-based curricula, individualized instruction, high expectations, and a nurturing environment that includes parental and community involvement;
 - (2) To provide opportunities for professional development and outreach for The University of Texas at Austin's academic units; and
 - (3) To serve as a model of an exemplary educational program for diverse learners.
- (<http://www.utelementary.org/about/index.htm>)

A number of innovative features distinguish the UT Elementary School from other schools for the children of East Austin. These features include:

- Instruction time, with a 30-minute-longer school day and an extra week of classes per year with several departments at The University of Texas at Austin, including nationally acclaimed Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts led by noted educator and researcher Dr. Sharon Vaughn, Director of the Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk.
 - Continuous curriculum improvement through research-guided instructional practices
 - Ongoing teacher development
 - Compact with the school's families which spells out expected conduct
 - Dress code which includes Little Longhorn uniforms
- (<http://www.utelementary.org/about/bestpractices/index.htm>)

UT Elementary goes a step further in promoting success in education for urban children because they recruit teachers that have earned their master's degrees. They are expected to prepare other teachers who work in urban environments regarding the best practices and latest research in their field. Because of the continuous affiliation with the university, they also mentor student educators and participate in research studies. It is a unique environment but has issues similar to other schools in that there is never enough

time in the school year to include all of the programs necessary to make the smartest, most well-adjusted students.

CST Arts Enrichment Program at UT Elementary School

This research was focused on the implementation of a new CST program: teaching in-school arts enrichment classes at UT Elementary. Using the model CST has already established at another elementary school, I taught interdisciplinary arts classes in two 2nd grade and two 1st grade classes as a community artist educator for 12 weeks. The project culminated with a performance at the CST theater including student-made costume pieces, live musical accompaniment, lights, and a full audience. CST provided the resources needed to complete this project. I collaborated with the UT Elementary 1st and 2nd grade teachers and administration to develop relevant arts programming that coincides with the school's curriculum goals, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for theater, art, and music, and CST's mission. I collected data using interviews and questionnaires of teacher participants, student participants, and the parents of the student participants at three different time periods: one before the program began, one during the program, and one after the culminating performance. This program was conducted on a semester-long time table that began in December 2010 and ended May 2011. I kept an observational journal as the teaching artist in this study, and recorded reflections about student participation, teacher associations, and the progress of the program from my point of view. This was undertaken in order to compile a list of components a community arts

organization should consider in order to carry out a successful collaboration in an urban school.

Conclusion

The three organizations involved in this study: kidsActing, CST, and UT Elementary School have all developed as entities in very different ways. However, they all are connected by me, the researcher, and by their missions: to educate children. Their missions are important to my philosophy in life: happy children lead to enjoyable and satisfied adults, which helps make the world a better and more satisfying place. Therefore, I set out to enrich the lives of a greater number of children by researching how to create more positive community collaborations between arts organizations and schools. In Chapter Four, I present a narrative account of how the CST arts enrichment program transpired according to the qualitative data I collected in teacher and student interviews, parent, student, and teacher questionnaires, and my personal journal as the program director and researcher.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTING THE DATA

Introduction

Throughout this chapter, I present data collected during the CST arts enrichment program at UT Elementary School. Using a predominantly qualitative methodology, I conducted interviews and presented questionnaires to the students, teachers, and parents of the participants. I show these findings in a sequential, chronological method in order to unfold the story as it was experienced and visually compare the results of each step of my research.

Because I have the privilege of being the Education Director at Center Stage Texas, I have developed and carried out interdisciplinary arts programs at other schools. Based on this experience, I chose UT Elementary for this study because I have a personal connection to an executive member of the UT Elementary Parent Forum. With her positive endorsement, I was able to secure a meeting with the principal and CST had a great recommendation before even starting the program. This was vital not only for getting in the door to begin this program but sustaining the enthusiasm with the administration and teachers throughout the program's planning.

Planning and Pre-Program Questionnaires

PLANNING WITH THE ADMINISTRATION

After being introduced to the UT Elementary principal and CEO, we made plans to discuss the logistics of getting the program off the ground. At the meeting we discussed the timing of this program with their calendar of school events, which grades would be most suited to participate, and the legal actions that need to be taken in order

for an organization outside of the school to work with their children. The principal was very excited about the theatre aspect of CST's program because they do not have theatre represented in their extracurricular programs offered at UT Elementary. He was also very interested in the interdisciplinary and open-ended nature of the program because he thought the teachers would be able to incorporate it into their curriculum with ease. The next step in the planning was to meet with the teachers to continue ironing out the specifics of the program with their students.

PRE-PROGRAM TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRES

Although I met with the teachers twice for the purpose of planning the program, I did not know a lot about their backgrounds, interests, and teaching experience. I asked them to fill out questionnaires in order for me to understand where they were in their teaching career, how much experience they have had with different art mediums, and programs such as the one we were planning. I only received the questionnaires back from the 1st grade teachers. Both of the 1st grade teachers have their students participate in art activities in their classes including daily drawings and curriculum-based projects that include design and construction. The examples they gave discussed their students using geometry to build robots out of boxes, cooking in language arts, singing during reading, and performing reader's theatre. One of the 1st grade teachers has been teaching for 28 years but only one year as a teacher at UT Elementary and in a different grade, while the other is a first year teacher and new to the school. Both teachers said the students participate in visual art classes and music outside of class as well as dance sometimes in their P.E. class on a three-day rotation. Neither teacher had participated in an

interdisciplinary arts program such as CST's but think it is "an awesome opportunity for these children." Both teachers also said they would participate in this program despite a personal incentive. Teacher A said she would also like her class to participate in more dance programs if they have the opportunity. She said she thinks "artwork is an excellent way for kiddos with dysgraphia to express themselves."

PLANNING WITH THE CLASSROOM TEACHERS

I met with the teachers during their off periods. Because of the limited time available, we were a little rushed in our discussion, but I was able to explain the main objectives of the program: (a) introducing the students to a real theatre experience complete with performing with lights, live accompaniment, and an audience on the CST stage; (b) being a part of an interdisciplinary arts experience complete with singing, dancing, making costumes, and rehearsing for a major performance; (c) and practicing skills needed to work as a group, increasing self-discipline, and enhancing self-confidence. We discussed some choices of show possibilities in order to choose songs that would interest the students and teachers, as well as connect with any of the curriculum they have planned for the corresponding time period. The teachers chose *The Lion King* as their 1st choice due to its connection to the animal kingdom, lifecycles, predator-prey relationships, and a dramatic story that could initiate discussions about making personal choices, family relationships, taking responsibility, and becoming a leader. The final thing we discussed at this meeting was timing for the span of the program, including finale dates as well as when a consistent time for me to teach in-class would fit into their daily schedule. We decided we would need more time to arrange this

and agreed to meet a second time and have some discussion by way of email. Over email, I presented the songs after I divided them by difficulty level and had the 1st grade teachers pick between the two easier songs, and the 2nd grade teachers the more involved songs. They decided that 1st grade class A would perform *The Circle of Life*, 1st grade class B would perform *The Lion Sleeps Tonight*, 2nd grade class A would perform *I Just Can't Wait to be King*, and 2nd grade class B would perform *Hakuna Matata*.

CLASS STRUCTURE AND SCHEDULE

During our second meeting we were able to solidify the daily and semester schedule, and I was able to show the teachers more specific plans about the lessons I was planning to teach. After comparing calendars, the teachers and I agreed to have one session a week for 45 minutes; 1st grade met from 1-2:30pm. on Mondays, class A at 1pm. And class B at 1:45pm.; and 2nd grade met from 8:45-10:15am. on Wednesdays, class A at 8:45am. And class B at 9:30am. We planned for 14 weeks of classes breaking for the winter holidays, skipping a week after they returned from the Winter Break to allow for the students to get reoriented to the school schedule, missing the week of Spring Break as well as the week before due to my attendance at an out-of-state conference, and suspending classes TAKS testing week in April. This meeting was even briefer than our first meeting, so we were only able to plan this much and not able to get deep into the substance of the daily lessons or work on interdisciplinary connections. However, the teachers seemed to think it all sounded fun and engaging, and left excited to start.

As the researcher and nonprofit organization's arts instructor, I was in a unique position that enabled me to reflect on my teaching practices as I collected my data each

class session. Coming from a public school classroom background, I used my preparation and experience to develop mini-lesson plans for each class session. I divided every classroom lesson into four sections: (a) a theatre technique-based, introduction game- 15 minutes; (b) a quick discussion about the objective that needs to be accomplished for the day- 3 minutes; (c) active learning of the day's objective- 25 minutes, (d) and a wrap-up discussion of what we accomplished and why along with what we will need to get done during the next session- 2 minutes. Towards the beginning of the sessions, most of the technique games were focused on getting to know the students and their names and having them practice being silly and performing in front of each other. I would have a game planned for the day, starting with learning a new game every class at the beginning of the program and having the students choose their favorites to replay for the last sessions. The only time I strayed from my plan was when the students were amped up and needed a calming game rather than one that would make them more energized.

As the program progressed, the teachers and the principal and I never met again formally to plan. Instead, I was able to organize and discuss the rest of the program's calendar with them before and after I taught class' sessions or over email. This was the method of communication we used to finalize the dates for the dress rehearsal and finale showcase. The dress rehearsal was held on April 27, 2011, and the final performance on May 4, 2011. We also planned for me to meet the parents at the 1st parent forum meeting on the evening of Tuesday, August 24, 2010, a student orientation where I introduced myself and played a game with the whole student body on the morning of Thursday, August 26, 2010, and an unexpected 2nd grade visit to the theater where they practiced

and performed their parent forum show on Feb. 8, 2011. Our final plan was for me to come meet the students and introduce the program during the last two weeks of December before the students left. This would leave them with time to anticipate and prepare for their auditions and the first day of learning material.

My Personal Teaching Journal

DECEMBER

The first class I taught was Teacher A's 1st grade class. When I walked into the classroom for the first time, the students were unbelievably excited to see me. She had told them about a "surprise" that was coming that afternoon and when they saw me, they put it together that I was something special. As they cleaned up from the activity they were involved in before, they couldn't stop staring at me, smiling, and even a few came up and asked me about what kind of surprise I was. The other 1st grade class joined us and we began.

The 1st activity we did was play, "What Time is it, Mr. Fox?" This is a movement game where the students have to use their imagination to act out an action. First, I went through the rules of the game including keeping all activity within a certain area, all touching to ourselves, and an open-mind and willingness to act out each action that was called for. After the rules were presented, we began each part of the game, which in this game includes all of the students calling out "What time is it Mr. Fox?" each time the leader points to their imaginary watch, how to sit down as fast as possible when the leader calls out "Lunchtime," and how the participants become chickens and get "gobbled up" if they don't sit down quick enough. This is a modification I make with a

large group of younger students because one way for students to “get to safety” is designating a wall or base for them to run to be safe from the fox. We then begin the game and “Mr. Fox,” the leader of the game, calls out the first activity. For example, the leader points to their imaginary watch and the children participants call out, “What time is it, Mr. Fox?” The leader then says, “It is time to be an angry bumble bee.” The student participants start buzzing around the space until the leader points to their watch again and calls out another action. This is one of my favorite games we play at CST because it calls on the students to use their imagination. There is no penalty for not being the best actor, it is a fun group-bonding experience that is a nice ice-breaking activity, and it gets kids moving creatively within reasonable boundaries that allows the activity to stay as calm as the space and the maturity of the students allows. Overall, the students were very excited and enjoyed their first game.

Next, I introduced the whole program we would be working on including introducing each of the class’ songs, discussing how they would be designing and constructing parts of their costumes, and their final performance at the theater. We had a quick discussion about CST, what we do, and what my job is. They mostly thought it was cool that my job was going to be to teach them how to dance, sing, make costumes, and perform on a stage, but some of the children had questions. They were mostly concerned about the final performance. A few students showed a little anxiety about getting to the point of being performance ready, but the majority of the students were very excited and ready to get started.

I presented the songs the students would be performing in grand fashion by having the kids do a drum roll to heighten the enthusiasm of each announcement. I put the words up on the overhead projector and had the students follow along as we listened to each of the songs. Even though they all tried hard to follow along, I do not think many of the students could read what was on the screen.

After going through the songs, I explained that next week we would start learning the words a lot better and even some of the dance they would be doing. They were genuinely excited and said a collective “Thank you” before I left. It was a cute and fun way to start with such a warm welcome and totally enthusiastic group of kids.

I repeated the same introduction lesson with the 2nd grade classes. We met as two separate classes, which were individually much easier to manage than the whole 1st grade. However, this approach lacked the unique sparkle the large group of younger ones had. They enjoyed the game and seemed excited about their songs. Our wrap-up discussion involved a little more than the 1st graders because I chose more complicated songs for the 2nd graders than the group numbers for the 1st graders allowing for some featured solo parts. They had several questions about auditioning for particular parts in the songs, but most students were very excited to tryout.

JANUARY

Each daily lesson followed a similar structure. However as the year went along different objectives were introduced as we got deeper into the substance of the performance, including choreography, lyrics, and auditioning for solo parts. The 2nd grade students had the most opportunity for featured parts and were very excited and

prepared to audition when I arrived for their 2nd class. When asked who wanted to audition for these parts, a majority of the class raised their hands. There was so much interest, I had to schedule two sessions worth of auditions instead of one. One of the 2nd grade classroom teachers really surprised me by having their students sign-up for which parts they wanted to audition for before I got there. Auditions involved some students singing specific parts of songs or acting out a particular emotion as if they were a character in the story. Students were selected by their ability to hit the correct notes, sing loud and with confidence, act out their emotion without holding back, and go above and beyond the directions given to sing or play their part. Some students seemed upset by the final announcement of parts, but I was surprised how many were very encouraging to their peers who were selected. They seem to mostly agree with the choices and the students selected were very excited to have this opportunity to perform. The students chosen for featured parts in one of the 2nd grade classes were clearly not the most well-behaved students, so I was interested to see how this special responsibility could help motivate them to improve their behavior.

As we wrapped up learning new material and dance movements, the students were very rambunctious. Playing "Simon Says" helped calm them down a bit. The situation was somewhat more unexpected in the 1st grade classroom. When I arrived in one of the 1st grade classrooms, they had a substitute teacher. The principal was in the room, and they had just started passing out a snack. It was obviously a surprise to the adults that I was going to be there so they picked up the snacks the students had just received. This caused a small, student revolt. The controversy continued while I taught

and I continued to be the “bad guy” in some students’ eyes. The principal ended up leaving. While I think he trusted the situation was under control, it still continued to be uncomfortable.

The next week was one of the 2nd grade teacher’s last days at this school. He had taken a position as a principal at another school. It was a little disconcerting because he was the only teacher that kept in communication with me digitally and always had his students prepared when I arrived. You could tell he worked with them on their performance when I was not in class and was a great supporter of the CST program. I was sad to see him go but could tell by his students and how he runs his classroom why he was chosen for this administrative position.

During the 1st grade classes the next week I was particularly challenged because for the first time I had an intern working with me, and we practiced the performance in the cafeteria instead of the classroom. The students did not handle the changes well, and neither did I. I showed up frazzled and not very prepared for the differences due to other outside teaching challenges. This was made even more difficult as the teachers did not stay in the room to help. The students were too spread out, which added to the behavior problems. They were lost when it came to placement even though we tried to re-teach and relate their entrance spots in the new space to their classroom dance positions. The intern was overwhelmed and not able to support behavior control being so new. The 2nd grade classes had the same issues, so I decided not to continue to practice in the cafeteria after that day.

FEBRUARY

The next couple of weeks continued with surprises every time I arrived. One day I walked into a Valentine's Day party. Another class had a giant, broken water bottle spill and a student start bleeding within the first 5 minutes of my arrival. The lack of student focus and small amount of material the students remembered was evident despite our encouragement and attempts to regain focus by using particular games. There were increases in talking and fidgeting despite even their teachers' attempts to "run off their sillies."

The 2nd grade classes visited the theater for the first time to rehearse for a separate performance one evening in February. Each grade at UT Elementary is responsible for a performance during a monthly Parent Forum meeting. The 2nd grade was responsible for the February performance and their show was supposed to celebrate African-American heritage. It was written and arranged by one of the 2nd grade teachers and was scheduled long before CST's program began. Having their performance at CST enabled me to take each 2nd grade class on a guided tour of the building and walk them through their entrances and dance placements for each of their songs. They really enjoyed being in the space and backstage most of all. They loved how dark it was and thought it was creepy and fun. Their performance for their parents went well but I noticed the students needed more training on how to act on a stage including things we have worked on in their classes like pointing their toes to the front of the stage while speaking and speaking in a clear and loud stage voice. The parents filled practically every seat, so it made me realize having all four 1st grade and 2nd grade classes in a performance might be too crowded for

the parents to all sit in the audience and for the students to all fit in the dressing room backstage. Because of the pre-planning already in place and having to fit their performance into both the school's and the theater's schedules, we did not get to separate the two grades' performances, but I could tell by this performance it would be a better idea if this were to be done.

The classes continued at their school the next week and 75-80% of the students seemed to be enjoying their songs and dances and looking forward to their finale performance. There were a couple students who obviously were not terribly excited about the performance. I tried to find the one thing we were working on that might interest them more than the singing or dancing. One 2nd grade boy did not seem to like singing, but he really loved doing a jazz square, a dance movement we had to really break down for the students to learn. When I complimented him and had him be the example of that particular move, he brightened up and was more willing to participate in the parts of the performance that he did not like as much. There was some bossiness from the students that had more experience on a stage, so we had to have some discussions about how to work as a team and what a performer does when they or others around them mess up. There was so little room to dance in their classroom that I hoped some of these problems would improve automatically when the students finally had room to spread out on the CST stage. I tried to explain the space on the stage to the students but it did not help quite as much as we needed it to. The lead roles all did well learning their parts but a couple needed one-on-one coaching. I discussed the possibility of offering the students who were really rising to the top scholarships for kidsActing summer camps with the

administration, some even despite their imperfect classroom behavior. This helped the students who needed a bit more motivation to bring out their best. The incentive pushed a handful of students to improve their behavior, but not as many as I thought it would.

MARCH

We began making our costumes pieces this week. Each class had a different project depending on the song they were performing: 1st grade class A made giant leaves, 1st grade class B and 2nd grade class B made animal masks, and 2nd grade class A made bird wings and beaks.

The students in the 1st grade class A made their giant leaves by tracing a pre-made cardboard leaf-shape onto poster board and green butcher paper, cutting them out, and gluing the pieces together. The next session, I taught them a quick lesson on symmetry, explaining and discussing how one side of a leaf is the mirror image of the other side like human bodies and faces. The students divided the leaf in half and drew symmetrical designs with a pencil. During the last two classes of the art project, the students traced over their pencil designs with a variety of colors of glitter glue. To complete the leaves, I hot-glued cardboard handles on to the back.

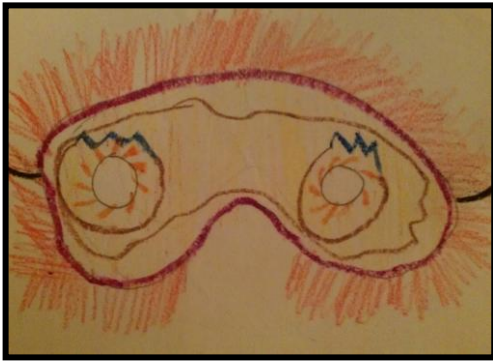


Figure 1: Animal Mask- by a 2nd grader



Figure 2: Decorating a Giant Leaf- by a 1st grader

The animal masks were made by two classes because both of their songs called for an array of different kinds of animals. Each student was given a piece of colored foam depending on their position on stage during their song and they traced a pre-made cardboard mask. They decorated their masks with symmetrical glitter glue designs after a quick lesson on symmetry. The last two classes were spent decorating the edges with animal print paper strips creating fringe and pipe cleaners in various fun shapes and colors. I cut out the eye-holes and attached elastic to the masks to complete them.

The 2nd grade class A had the biggest task making two different costume pieces, wings and beaks. The students were given various pieces of colored paper, traced pre-made cardboard feathers, and cut out at least twenty feathers, ten per wing. They glued the feathers on in any pattern they chose. When they were finished with their wings, the students traced and cut out their beaks. I attached black ribbon to their wings and elastic to their beaks so they were ready to wear.

The 1st graders started making their costume pieces in the cafeteria to have plenty of space to spread out, but this did not work out well. We passed out scissors, pencils, stencils, and foam pieces and the majority of students seemed to be happy with the colors they received. The students had a very hard time tracing and cutting on the floor rather than at a table, more than I thought would be the case. The 2nd graders stayed in class to start their projects and had a much easier time starting.

The students' reaction to some of the materials was a surprise. The classes that were making masks and working with colored foam thought it smelled weird and was strange to cut. They wanted to save their scraps because they had never worked with the foam before and wanted to take it home. The class making giant leaves liked them but complained about how big they were because they had to cut so much. The group making wings seemed to enjoy their first day but were the most unsure about what they were making. As much as I do not like to lead students to make particular works of art, it would have been helpful for me to bring examples of the final products.

The next week we continued making our costume pieces. The products and pacing of each step seemed to be going well partly because I think I was able to improve on projects I taught at another school. When I conducted the lessons on symmetry with each group, they were all familiar with the concept. I think the stress-free nature of not getting a grade and just making their costume pieces as a fun project to enhance their performance helped them enjoy listening and learning compared to how they would have acted if it had been a formal lesson.



Figure 3: Hiding Behind a Leaf- by a 1st grader



Figure 4: Making Bird Wings- by a 2nd grader

At the end of these classes, I was able to catch up with the teachers and ask them about their feelings regarding the program so far. The 1st grade teachers admitted that they were unsure at the beginning about how this would fit in to their schedule and work with their young students but mostly because one was new to the school and the other was new to this grade. They both said they are more comfortable now that we have started and can picture how this can continue to fit with their classes in the future. They both said they would love to continue with CST. I asked whether they would be interested in receiving more interdisciplinary additions from me to connect our program's material to what they were doing in class. They both admitted they would be interested but did not know how many of these ideas they would actually be able to use.

This week, I entered to cheers of "Center Stage is here" and "Miss Nina," so it was obvious to me the students were happy and excited to finish making their costume pieces. They loved working with glitter glue so much that it got very quiet as they were

working, a very unusual occurrence. At this point I was not worried about the class' song performances but I was starting to worry about the logistics of the show. The UT Elementary students had not had very much experience on a stage and needed more time to reflect on the material to have it soak in, due to their inexperience. One rehearsal for a couple of hours was not enough to try on costumes and become familiar with lining up backstage, walking backstage to entrances, entering and performing with their costumes on, exiting and getting all the way back to the dressing room quiet and ready to do it all over again. As much as we have practiced all of these steps, they were not quite ready. Overall their excitement level was really high and they were ready to get to the theater, even more so than the other school I have worked with. I think this was due to the teachers' continuous motivation and the school's passionate nature about participating and having each student do their best.

APRIL

Their first rehearsal at the theater went well but went by way too fast. The classes stayed in the audience until it was their turn to perform. As much as each class was excited to see the other class' performances, they got bored and it took too long to get their turn. When the 1st grade classes were done, we ended up having them leave while the 2nd graders got their turn. It took the bus longer to return, but it was a good adjustment. The 2nd graders went a little faster because of their previous visit and because they watched the 1st graders as they practiced.

Before each class' turn on stage, we went over how to be backstage: (a) only walk, (b) do not touch any props or other objects for safety, (c) be as quiet as a mouse,

and (d) no peeking out from behind the curtains. I had each class walk on to the stage and get in their dance positions, point to where they were going to exit, walk off, and go all the way back to the dressing room, and stay in entrance order. They got into their costumes, which all needed some adjusting. It was a challenge to dress 20 students in multiple costume pieces including the pieces they made, which some were having troubles with, but luckily I had CST staff available to help the performers. The classroom teachers assisted with behavior backstage and handing out costume pieces as well. Unfortunately, some of the students' masks did not fit well and parts of the masks were insecure, but the frustration was soon forgotten when they began practicing on stage. The kids were more than excited to practice their performance in full costume and enjoyed being able to perform on stage. Each class had some programmatic issues but overall stepped up their performances. You could see the realization in some of the students' eyes about the material I had been trying to relay to them like "toes to the front" and "using a stage voice." Some students still had a bit of a stunned look and seemed a little nervous, but all of them participated and really tried their best. It was a fun day and I could feel the excitement building for their finale performance.

MAY

The performance day was a ball of chaotic exploding energy. The students were excited, the teachers were nervous, the parents were encouraging, and the CST staff was hopeful everything would go well. Each class did their very best. There were standout performances that I had expected and there were some I had not. Some students that had been wallflowers really turned on their energy and performed the best they ever had.

There were some mask issues, like slipping off their faces or the elastic holding them on a little too tight, but everyone recovered well and kept going like we had coached them. The lead roles all did great with very minimal memory issues. There was one group that did wonderfully despite the fact that one of the lead role's masks kept making pig noises they had never heard before. The audience could not hear it very well, but the students could. There was some extra giggling, but it made their performance very memorable and fun for all. The audience was so happy to have had the experience but especially for their children. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and it seemed like everyone left with a smile on their face.

Post-Program Interviews and Questionnaires

POST-PROGRAM TEACHER INTERVIEWS

I conducted the post-program teacher interviews with the 1st grade and 2nd grade teachers separately. They shared many of the same interests and concerns with the CST program including how it operated and can continue in the future. As a whole, they said their students looked forward to their performance rehearsal time each week. They agreed, "it gives students a unique opportunity to express themselves because we do not have a program like this currently offered by our school. [At UT Elementary,] the students get a chance to work with instruments and perform in other ways, but nothing to this extent." One teacher said they encourage us to continue "because otherwise students are not exposed to this type of arts experience until middle school and can become too guarded, otherwise." Another teacher noticed there were students that she knew would thrive in this performance realm, but then there were students who surprised her. A

couple of students, in particular, “are normally very quiet in class and tend to keep to themselves during their day-to-day academics. But when they were chosen for featured roles, they really came out of their shells. I had no idea they had these talents.” The teachers did notice the difficulty a couple of students had because of their extreme introverted natures, but even noticed the progress they made, especially leading up to the final performance.

All the teachers said they found ways to connect the subject matter to their curriculum. One example was when they were studying animals, their habitats, and life cycles. They had visited the zoo, so it was easy for the students to connect with the animals in *The Lion King* as they practiced their performances and made their masks. The teachers did not seem too interested in CST taking on a larger role in developing curricular connections for future projects and acted as if that was the fun part for the teachers to undertake.

There were several suggestions that stemmed from concerns about the program the teachers had or that were expressed to them by the students’ parents about the program. First was communication. The teachers felt that CST did an adequate job of trying to let the parents know about the finale performance, but there was a bit of backlash afterward from the parents stating they did not know about it and were unable to attend due to the performance being during the work day. The teachers’ suggestions were to start communicating the dates and times earlier as well as sending more emails and text messages because letters home tend to get lost. By telling them earlier and in different forms of communication, they thought this would enable more parents to

request off during the day or use vacation time so they could attend the performance. The teachers also suggested having more performances including one in the evening. The teachers said they had about the same response as they do to their weekly take-home folders, so they did not find this reaction from the parents unusual. If the parents do not check the announcements sent home in these folders, there is not much else we could have done.

Second, the schedule of the weekly classes and performance trips to the theater was very intense. Both grades said that the schedule started off fine, but more and more other special programs began and made it hard for them to fit in their core curriculum teaching time. They listed these other programs as Spanish once a week for an hour, library time 30 minutes a week, a nutrition program that started after March, assemblies in the morning, along with the other daily extracurricular classes as reasons for missing approximately 2-3 weeks of teaching time. They suggested connecting our program with the other annual performance each grade is required to perform for their monthly Parent Forum meetings. The 2nd grade teachers expressed interest in working together to create an original script about African American History Month. One of the teachers wrote a play the students have performed for the past couple of years, but is interested in updating it and having something new for next year. The 1st grade teachers said they would like to connect the performance to History and Social Studies, but their program is 2 months earlier in the year, so scheduling would need to be adjusted. We would have to start earlier and have a separate schedule from 2nd grade. One of the teachers indicated she

likes the thought of doing a show not related to what they are studying in class because it gives the students another outlook on life and learning something new.

The teachers all gave suggestions for starting the program for the next year without any question about whether or not CST would be a part of their school year. It seemed like they all had an enjoyable experience and felt it very valuable for their students that the teachers want to find ways to make it work better for their schedules, the parents' schedules, and for the benefit of all of the students involved.

POST-PROGRAM C.E.O. INTERVIEW

I interviewed the CEO of UT Elementary to secure her feedback on the program from the beginning of the planning to the final performance. She said “anytime we can put the kids in an arena of performance and tie it to academic goals like literacy and shared cultural stories, there is meaning.” She loves that the students were “having their spirits engaged and learning with movement.” She liked that they had “clearly defined routines and they would practice the routines engaging the classroom space in a different way.”

She had several suggestions for improvement for the next year. She thought having photos of great performance examples and warm-ups and routines on recorded podcasts for the teachers and other school leaders to assist the students in practicing would be helpful. She also set a time for us to meet during the summer after the special area schedule was established to start planning for the next academic year.

To clear up communication issues, she wanted to make sure all the classroom time and trips to the theater were on the school calendar farther in advance. This way

parents were more aware of theater trips and performance dates by being able to see the dates on their website, and the school would be able to send more updates through texts and emails alongside paper announcements. She also suggested including more communication about the program in the parent newsletter that is prepared during the last week of every month.

She thought that improving or adding to the already-established performances for the Parent Forum meetings might help lighten the teachers' schedules. She liked taking what they already do and enhancing it with CST's involvement. Her example was how the pre-kinder and kindergarteners learn a dance and song in Spanish and perform around Cinco de Mayo. She thought we could add to this by encouraging more students to have individual acting parts, even more opportunities to practice theatre skills and to shine using those skills, and for the teachers and me to be very strategic in choosing the stories we select trying to involve more cultural connections. She wanted to make sure "specific and concrete connections are made to core academics through the TEKS and literacy."

She was excited to be able to continue this program when they have an outdoor theater space at the school in two years, because she was concerned "the freeform movement was messing up materials in the classroom." She also suggested connecting to their music class and adding to the material they perform for that class in order to make their performances "bigger and more elaborate."

POST-PROGRAM STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRES

The week after the finale performance, I returned to UT Elementary to have the students reflect on their experience and fill out a post-program questionnaire. We talked

about making sure they understood there is no wrong answer and anything they wanted to share was helpful. This was intended for the students to share their feelings in order to improve the program for the future and understand what made it impactful for them. When I asked each question, I wrote the question on the board in front of the class and had students brainstorm answers. Then I listed their answers on the board for all of them to see in order to help with spelling questions. I made it a point to tell them not to write their answer until we go back and remember as much as we can as a group because they might have a different answer than what is on the list. Included along with the data described below are pictures the students drew as examples of their most memorable experience with the CST program.

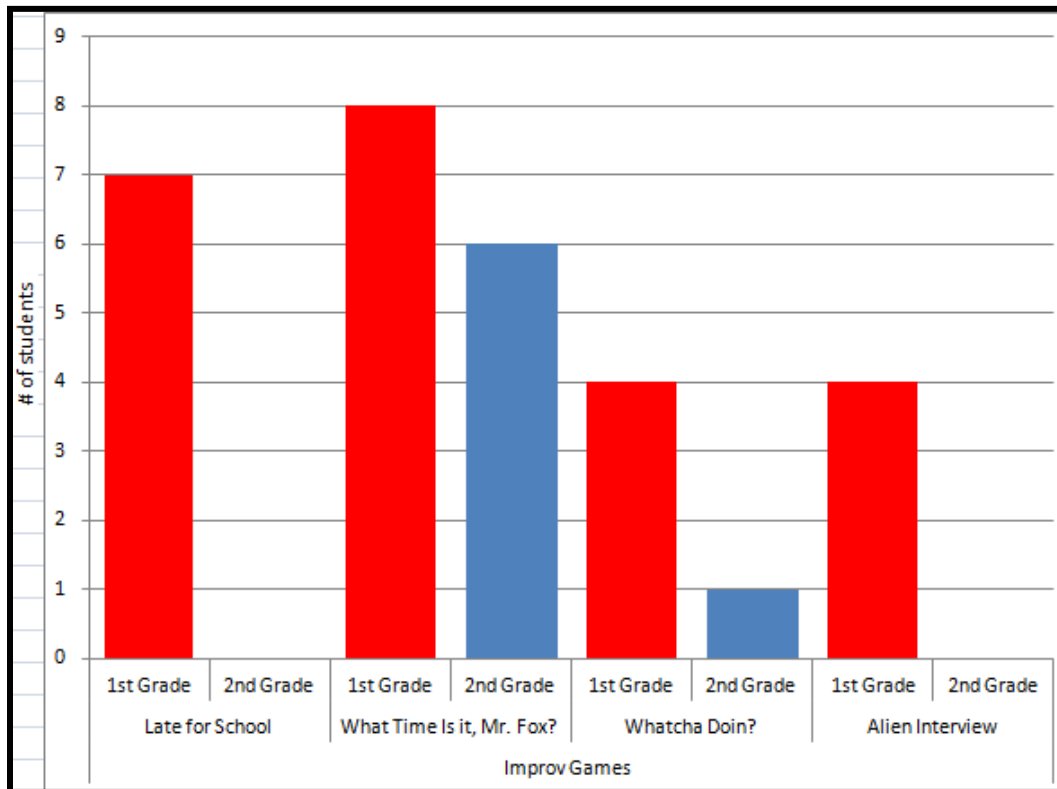


Table 1: Student Questionnaire Question 1- Improv Games

When asked what games they remember and liked best, the answers were quite varied. Out of 12 games, at least one student remembered and chose each one as their favorite. Some games were hits in 1st grade and not in 2nd grade like “Teacher’s Gonna Have a Cow” and “Alien Interview.” “Zip-Zap-Zop,” “Crocca-Diddley-Oom-Bop,” and “The Prince of Paris” conversely had more 2nd graders enjoy them, while not one 1st grader listed them as their favorite. The games that seem to resonate between both of the grades equally were “Simon Says,” “What Time Is It Mr. Fox?,” and “Gotcha.” The favorite among the majority of the 2nd graders was “The Prince of Paris” and the game remembered by most 1st graders was “Gotcha.” Two students mentioned games they did not like: “Teacher’s Gonna Have a Cow” and “Elephant-Rabbit-Giraffe,” but there were several other students that listed them as the one they remembered most. One student said what they remember most was winning and another said, “When Miss Nina does something crazy.”

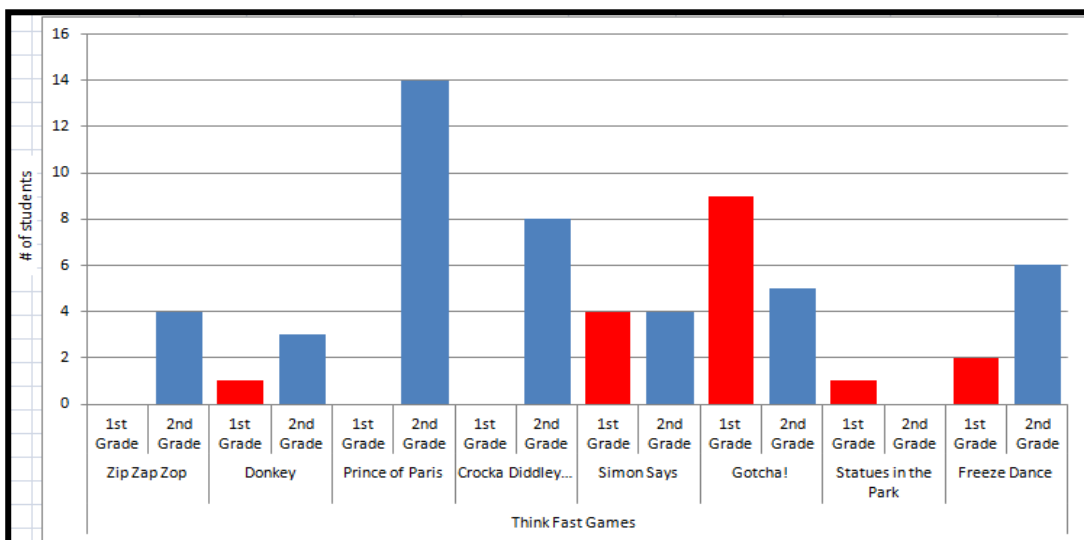


Table 2: Student Questionnaire Question 1- Think Fast Games

The second question was, “What do you remember about the material we learned?” The majority of the students in both grades said either making their costume or something about the song they performed. The majority of the 1st graders mentioned the costume-making and the majority of the 2nd graders mentioned their songs. Four 1st grade students and seven 2nd grade students listed dancing or learning their dance. Four 2nd grade students mentioned they remember expressing themselves and four mentioned doing a jazz square. Three 1st grade students recorded remembering using glitter glue. There were several other answers with just one to a couple of students in either grade mentioning them such as learning their lines, practicing, making sure their toes are to the front, doing everything, and doing their play.



Figure 5: Dancing on Stage in Masks- by a 1st grader

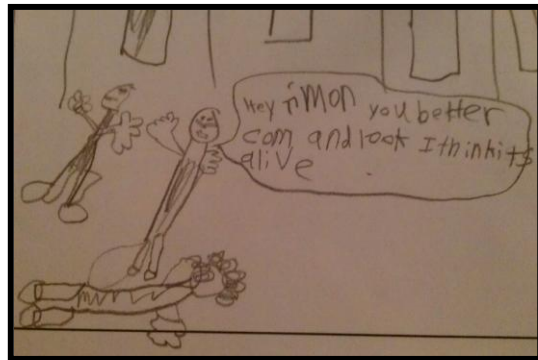


Figure 6: Performing the Intro Scene to *Hakuna Matata*- by a 2nd grader

I asked the students what they remember most about their time at the theater. The answers were also quite a range. The majority of the 2nd graders, fifteen students, mentioned something about backstage as their most memorable moment, while the

majority of the 1st graders said their most memorable moment was trying on their costumes. Five 1st grade students listed playing “Simon Says” at the theater as memorable and four 1st grade students’ most memorable moment was getting to watch the other classes perform. Five 2nd grade students mentioned remembering the background set on the stage as being trees and a wooded scene, while four 2nd grade students mentioned it being “spooky backstage” because it was dark. Many more 2nd graders wrote a memorable item no other student wrote. For example, they listed the stage, the lights, loving the show, and seeing props in the dressing room. A couple of 1st graders mentioned the song they sang and practicing. The only negative comments were when one student said they remembered “the lights shining in my eyes” and another’s was



Figure 7: Performing in a Bird Costume- by a 2nd grader

when “my mask flew off.”

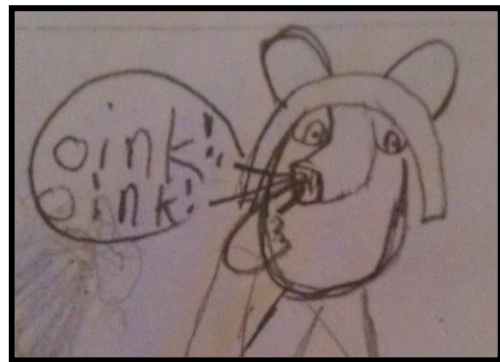


Figure 8: Wearing a Pig Mask- by a 2nd grader

The results of the students’ answers when asked what they remember most about their show were a little opposite of the third question. This time the 1st graders answers

were more unique and the 2nd graders had more similar responses. The majority of the 2nd graders listed dressing up or being in costume as their most memorable part about the show while the majority of the 1st graders most memorable moment about the show was sitting or being quiet backstage. Many 1st graders also wrote more than one answer with the most memorable for seven students being the audience, five students the audience clapping, five students singing, four students being in costume, and four students performing for their parents. Some of the unique answers students found most memorable were meeting the CST accompanist, the student's animal pose being shy, and saying the first line. Some of the quotes students listed as what they remembered about their show said, "It was funny," "I had fun," and "It means no worries for the rest of your days" (a line from the song "Hakuna Matata" in *The Lion King*).



Figure 9: Dancing on Stage in Wings- by a 1st grader



Figure 10: Introducing the Show as Rafiki- by a 2nd grader

POST-PROGRAM STUDENT FOCUS GROUP

I met with a small group of four students out on a picnic table at UT Elementary a week after their finale performance. We discussed what the students liked about the program, how they felt about the different aspects, and what they would like to do next year if the program continued. The students shared that they would like to do parts of different shows like *Beauty and the Beast* or *Sleeping Beauty*. They were not too excited about the prospect of getting a grade for participating in a program like this but were surprisingly accepting of adding more core subject matter into the content next year.

Looking back and reading through the questions and answers during the interview, the freshest part on their minds was the performance and not the work it took us to get to that point. In hindsight, I think it would have been more informative and I would have received more well-rounded data if I had interviewed this small group of students before, during, and after the program, or even done so bi-weekly.

POST-PROGRAM PARENT QUESTIONNAIRES

At the end of the students' finale performance, the parents were handed a post-program questionnaire. Out of all of the audience that was in attendance, twenty-five parents turned in their post-program questionnaires. Although it was a free show, not all parents were able to attend. I found out after the finale performance that this was partly due to the fact that we had to schedule the show during the work day and not all parents could get off work to attend and partly because not all parents were aware that their student was participating in the show.

I asked the parents six questions: three having a “yes,” “no,” or “I don’t know” answer, two being open-ended, and one having both parts. The results were overwhelmingly positive with the open-ended answers being widely varied.

The first question was to see if they thought their child enjoyed the CST arts enrichment program. Twenty-three out of twenty-five parents said “yes,” 0 parents answered “no,” and two wrote “I don’t know.”

Twenty-two parents said their child previously mentioned the program to them, two parents said their children did not, and one parent did not have an answer. When asked what their student mentioned about the program, the majority of the parents answered something about their child being excited to perform on the stage. Three of the parents said their child mentioned that they were practicing for the show, one student showed their parent some of their performance, one student mentioned making their mask, one student told their parents their costume was hot, and one student said they were Simba in the show when they really were not.

The third question asked if the parent enjoyed the finale showcase. Twenty-three parents answered “yes” and two questionnaires did not have an answer for this question.

When asked what the parents’ favorite part of the performance was, the majority of the answers were “everything” or “all of it.” Three parents mentioned their son’s smile during the performance or applause, four parents mentioned the excitement and smiles on the kids’ faces, one parent said the ending group song, three parents mentioned specific songs, one parent said it was obvious how well the kids worked together, one parent

mentioned the costumes, props, and choreography, and one parent said it looked like everyone worked hard.

Out of twenty-five questionnaires, all twenty-five answered “yes” when asked if they thought the CST collaboration with UT Elementary was valuable to their child’s education.

The sixth question asked what they would like to see added to the program if we continue next year. The answers were varied. Two parents mentioned wanting to know more about after-school programming, one wanted more dancing, one wanted more songs, one wanted more scenes from the movie, and one wanted more shows. One parent said they hoped the students could have more of this during school and more programs like this at UT Elementary. Three thought we did an awesome job and wanted us to “keep up the good work.” Two said it looked “well rehearsed” while two other parents said they would not change anything because “it was perfect.” One parent mentioned they would like to see the children contribute more beyond the performance such as producing, writing, composing, etc. One parent said they were “glad to see children enjoying what they are doing.” Only one parent mentioned they would like to have microphones for the students because they were hard to hear.

Conclusion

Using a qualitative research method, I collected data by conducting interviews with individuals and small groups before and after the program was completed as well as reviewing questionnaires answered by students, teachers, and parents. Being the

researcher and the director of the program, I also made use of my personal journal as a sequential source of data collection and reflection. In the next chapter, this data is used to determine what worked well and what needs improvement about the collaboration between CST and UT Elementary, and along with recommendations by published experts in the field, to establish the essential components needed to conduct successful arts integration collaborations with an urban school.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYZING THE RESEARCH DATA

Introduction

In order to analyze the data collected through my research, I examined all interviews, questionnaires, and my personal journal. According to the students, teachers, administration, parents, and CST staff, there were definite successes and improvements that need to be made, rightly so considering this was our first time working together on this program. I compiled this data into two lists: one list of positive experiences and one list of needed improvements. I also studied the resources I collected in order to assemble a list of what experts suggest as the most important aspects to consider when developing successful arts integration programs between a school and a community arts organization. Then, I analyzed all these to determine the major themes present in all of them. These themes became the major categories of this chapter: resources including time and participants, communication, and flexibility. Once these categories were established, I took the analyzed successes and challenges and divided them according to the corresponding themes. Lastly, I added my observations and recommendations for improvement. Together, these provide the reader with suggestions to follow in order to organize a successful arts integration partnership between a school and a community arts organization.

Resources

RESOURCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Change demands additional resources for training, for substitutes, for new materials, for new space, and, above all, for time. Change is "resource-hungry" because of what it represents -- developing solutions to complex problems,

learning new skills, arriving at new insights, all carried out in a social setting already overloaded with demands. Such serious personal and collective development necessarily demands resources. (Panaritis, 1995, p. 623)

A key to success for any arts collaboration project is securing as many resources as possible. While researching suggestions from existing literature about the resources necessary to develop successful arts collaborations, the fundamental ideas advised organizations to allocate time, collect and utilize financial support, and assemble and engage committed participants. These concepts were emphasized in various ways depending on the nature of the programs analyzed but collectively the literature affirmed many of the aspects that were successful and challenging throughout the arts collaboration program between CST and UT Elementary School.

Allocate Time

Time is one of the most important resources needed for success in arts integration programs. If utilized correctly in a collaborative project, it can help foster familiarity between participants in order to gain trust and respect for each other, allow for planning and preparation in order to develop a clear curriculum and precise objectives, and permit the organization of a schedule and structure for the best delivery of material (Cole, 2010; Massey, 2007; Panaritis, 1995; Rabkin & Redmond, 2006; Rademaker, 2003).

Collect and Utilize Financial Support

Financial support is essential for any program, especially arts integration projects. “Not all programs supported with adequate resources succeed... [but] without adequate resources, programs almost never succeed” (Panaritis, 1995, p. 623). This includes all community partners whose ventures might provide financial patronage for the project:

foundations and grants, the school, the community arts organization, families of the participants, and/or private businesses. Funding is needed to pay for a range of necessary resources. These can consist of salaries for staffing, materials, transportation, space, and unexpected necessities (Massey, 2007; Rabkin & Redmond, 2006).

Assemble and Engage Committed Participants

According to prior research, a decisive difference found in the success of a community arts organization's collaboration with a school can be the team of participants and the engagement of these participants. These team members include the community arts organization's teaching artists and board members, the school's administration and staff, the teachers at the school whose students are directly involved in the projects, the students participating, and the parents of the students participating. Without a strong commitment from these players, a community arts organization and school's attempt at collaboration can be stopped before it has even started. Other members of the community should also be made aware of the collaboration's existence and its successes, but their overall commitment is not as crucial.

Teachers

Successful pilot programs are usually created by successful teachers. These are typically people who enjoy teaching, feel a strong sense of professional efficacy, welcome challenges, and have earned a reputation for collegiality, hard work, and innovation. For them, the rewards of participation are mostly intrinsic, and the possibility of failure, as well as the certainty of extra work, is a risk worth taking. (Panaritis, 1995, p. 623)

Almost every one of the resources I studied mentioned leadership in some capacity as a necessary aspect in all successful collaborative efforts. Recruiting the

essential leaders and then assuring these players are committed to the complete fulfillment of the project is crucial (Appel, 2006; Massey, 2007; Panaritis, 1995). As stated by Panaritis (1995), the involvement in the community arts program should always be voluntary: “Interdisciplinary programs in which participation is compulsory or delegated ... seldom succeed [and] ... often squander a faculty’s precious reservoir of energy and good will” (p. 623). Community arts organizations should engage the teachers in designing curriculum (Cole, 2010). This allows for more significant commitment to the program (Appel, 2006). “Decision making should generally be left to the people who are actually going to teach the lessons. Teachers (and even students) must feel some ownership of what will be taught, when, and how” (Panaritis, 1995, p. 623). This cooperative effort between experts can assist in “building relationships through common vision” and the use of a “common language” (Cole, 2010, p. 22) and promote a unified bond of leadership.

Whether the main organizers are the teachers or the teaching artists, training in national and local standards, experience teaching their respective subject matter, and continuous staff development opportunities can make a tremendous difference to the success of an arts integration program (Appel, 2006; Stankiewicz, 2001). Though Panaritis (1995) suggests “whether or not team members have prior experience or a theoretical foundation in interdisciplinary education is ... far less important than whether or not they are convinced (morally and pedagogically) that change is both necessary and possible” (p. 623), it is still more beneficial to involve experienced instructors. This experience can begin at the college-level. Rabkin and Redmond (2006) suggest that

“training pre-service teachers before beginning to teach in schools in integrating the arts and utilizing community resources on a school’s campus can promote a more positive collaboration due to the amount of knowledge necessary for successful partnerships” (p. 64).

It is important for a community arts organization to respect the professional space of the arts teachers in service on a campus and recruit their expertise (Rademaker, 2003). This fosters integration instead of promoting a negative atmosphere of competition. Stankiewicz (2001) explains that a “community’s arts organizations ... should be supplementary resources for students, enriching, never replacing, the arts curricula taught in the schools” (p. 6). Exercising “compromise for the common goal” and being “inclusive rather than exclusive” leads to fostering the most productive relationships between a collaborative project’s professionals and creating an environment of trust and respect needed for the most positive outcome (Stankiewicz, 2001, p. 6).

Students

Rademaker (2003) explains that offering students the “freedom of choice” allows students to understand having options and foster preference as an adult” (p. 15). Using a democratic approach to education, even with elementary-aged children, can inspire greater enthusiasm for the content resulting in a deeper commitment to learning and motivation to do well throughout an interdisciplinary arts program. This can also assist with improved behavior and a higher quality product due to greater engagement. Rabkin and Redmond (2006) explain,

In arts-integrated classrooms, work more often clearly and meaningfully connects to students' own experiences and feelings. Students create a product for an audience that matters to them—not just their teachers, but also their schoolmates, families, and communities—and they internalize motives to do well. They use freedom productively and responsibly. They develop aesthetic standards and experience a sense of accomplishment. (p. 63)

Administration

Utilization of all administrative participants, including at the district level and school principals, for their support and access to resources, is very important throughout a collaborative program's development and completion (Rabkin & Redmond, 2006). It is up to the principals whether or not to allow outside entities to operate on their campus and then decide how much support to offer them. This support can be reflected in scheduling, "logistical flexibility," enabling time and/or money for staff development opportunities, and promotion of the program (Cole, 2010). A school's administration can be critical players and offer unknown financial sponsorship. Their presence alone at a rehearsal or performance can open doors previously closed to a program.

PROGRAM'S SUCCESSES- TIME

Gain Familiarity to Earn Trust

The most important requirement for the development of school-community-university connections is the development of trust. Such disparate organizations and groups need to feel both that they can trust the other, and that the other trusts them. (Panaritis, 1995, p. 623)

Understanding the needs of a school and its students is important so as to not initiate too much overlap or duplication of curricula. This could create unnecessary competition for funds and participation in a program that would not benefit the school, the students, or the arts organization. In order to avoid these issues, a community arts

organization should take time to investigate what arts opportunities already exist at a school, sit in potential classes in order to understand the structure, processes, and behavior management tools the teachers utilize, and fill in where there are deficits to provide the most desirable product (Massey, 2007).

UT Elementary does not have a theatre program. They have art and music special area classes every third day and the UT String Project, an after-school program that meets on Wednesday afternoons sponsored by The University of Texas. Because this school also operates as a research facility, there are many university scholars conducting studies with different groups of students, so there is the occasional extra arts opportunity. The teacher participants provide arts opportunities in the classroom as much as possible but are already hard pressed to fit in all of the four core subjects' tested material, and they are not trained in all of the art disciplines. CST was able to offer the school arts learning opportunities and a performance space in which to celebrate. Knowing how this arts project would be compatible with the needs of UT Elementary School was a benefit when establishing a partnership, and led to the success of this program.

Teachers revealed at the onset of the program that they were worried because they were not sure how much CST would demand of their time and affect their schedule. The teachers said they became more acquainted with the procedure once the program began. They understood what to expect once a routine was set, and the teachers were more comfortable with us being a part of their schedule.

From the first meeting with the principal to the finale performance, I always felt appreciated as a teaching artist bringing an engaging learning opportunity to UT

Elementary School and its students. The office staff was helpful when I had questions and always welcoming every time I signed in. The students were excited to see me when I arrived to teach and discussed their anticipation about the final performance. I felt supported by the teachers when they assisted with behavior issues, communicated about the schedule, and encouraged their students to do well. They seemed appreciative and not as if this program was a chore on their long list of things to do. The principal remained a constant supporter expressing his gratitude for the collaboration in a very considerate speech to the audience and students at the final show. Even though CST provided the majority of the collaboration's resources, this program helped foster the partnership between the two institutions and build a solid foundation for future projects.

In-Class Structure and Curriculum

The structure of the mini-lessons I taught daily worked well with this age group and in the allotted amount of time we had to work. Starting each session with theatre games usually got the students motivated about working on the performance. Sometimes it was necessary for them to establish their focus so I strategically chose games to direct the students' attention to the objective of the day or a technique that would support learning this particular objective. Weaning them off of game play as the performance date drew nearer generally worked, but the games were what some of the students looked forward to most. For the most part, the students got nervous about the impending show so they were more agreeable rehearsing for the entire session. The teachers would step in to remind particular students to stay on task after they heard me calling a name repeatedly, but for the most part the teachers "c[a]me to realize that [we could] act on behalf of each

other, comfortable and confident in the decisions, activities, and outcomes of the partnership” (Noel, 2010, p. 6).

The first two classes served as an important opportunity to grasp the students’ attention and secure their anticipation for more. While the teachers were instrumental in getting the students excited about starting the program, the game we played on the first day was effective in opening the students’ imaginations and getting them relaxed, they were eager to learn more about the material they would be performing, and seemed genuinely motivated to get started. It also worked out nicely that the introductory sessions were before the school’s Winter Break, so when the students returned they were ready to hunker down and dive deep into learning *The Lion King* content.

Choosing *The Lion King* as the performance theme was successful. The students were familiar with the movie. This improved their motivation to learn the words to the songs they had heard, audition for their favorite featured characters, and make costume pieces they recognized. Sometimes the familiarity went too far because the students did not want to stray from the original script. I explained we were doing our own, unique version and they seemed satisfied with that justification for differences. The students were more energized and willing to move around because they were singing and dancing to upbeat songs. The teachers were able to relate to the content and correlate their lessons without difficulty because they knew the story and it had many topics to explore. It was also more entertaining for the audience because they recognized the characters their children were portraying and sang along to the familiar songs.

The pacing of the visual art/costume piece projects was also a success. My experience as an elementary school visual art teacher was an advantage when planning how to explain the objectives, how much time each objective would take to complete, and how to organize the materials. While creating their projects, the majority of the students stayed on task, were engaged in their creation, and proud of their results. The primary issue to overcome was figuring out where to store the projects between sessions.

Dress Rehearsal at CST

During the dress rehearsal at the theater, two classes sat in the audience and watched another class perform while one class changed into their costumes. Appel (2006) encourages “participants learn by doing and by observing” (p. 17). Seeing their peers perform added to the anticipation of their chance to get on stage. This observation opportunity also helped them understand what would be expected of them when it was their turn. As each class would rehearse, I would reinforce good technique and indicate areas for improvement to both the class on stage and the classes watching. This allowed me to give constructive feedback to the majority of the performers at once and encourage the students observing the performance to resolve issues they might encounter before they got on stage. The shortage of time was aided by taking advantage of every teaching moment. It was also exciting to see the spontaneous cheers and applause from the students in the audience as each class would return from the dressing room with their costumes on. The students’ experience at this rehearsal and their trip to the theater promoted more enthusiasm than discussions during in-class rehearsals and fostered even further anticipation for their performance.

At the last moment the day of the dress rehearsal I found out the 1st grade had to get back to the school before the 2nd graders were finished because another special program coincided with ours. Therefore, the two grades ended up staggering some of their rehearsal time at the theater. This was a blessing in disguise because we needed the time with fewer students in the theater to solidify the students' new knowledge while not having to wrangle eighty students in a new space at once.

PROGRAM'S CHALLENGES- TIME

Planning with Teachers

Trying to organize the logistics of this program with the teachers during their planning period was difficult. The time was too limited and we never finished our discussions before they had to go pick up their students from special area classes. Ultimately, we finalized the weekly schedule but left some of the other details to be decided later and through email. Because time was already so constrained, I did not have the occasion to offer the teachers an accurate plan with more interdisciplinary lessons and opportunities for connections with the other core subjects they teach. It was clear from the beginning that all the teachers and students had time for in their schedule was a more prescribed program that did not add more to their plates. I believe the teachers would have taught more interdisciplinary lessons if it had been more of our focus. However, I think they were grateful not to be given more to do and to leave the performance in the hands of the professional artists.

The 1st and 2nd grade classes at UT Elementary School have many other special programs they participate in. While having to cover the core subjects, lunch, and recess in

a teaching day, teachers also had to make room for a weekly Spanish hour-long lesson, special area classes, library time, and a nutrition program in March. The teachers did express their concern about getting everything completed and having enough time for thorough instruction.

Lack of Time and Experience

More time was needed during the dress rehearsal to work on technical issues. Many of the students had never performed in a costume while singing and dancing on a stage with live accompaniment, bright lights in their eyes, and a live audience to make them even more nervous. When all these aspects of a show are combined, even the most seasoned actors do not have perfect performances. We rehearsed being ready for the unexpected, and taught the students “the show must go on.” This is easier said than done.

Despite their lack of time and experience, the students did very well dealing with unexpected occurrences. For example, one of the students wore a mask CST provided for their featured character. I did not know until too late, but the mask made pig noises. We did not rehearse with this mask because the costumer did not have access to it at the time. So when the performance was in progress and the student’s mask started making pig noises, the other featured actors started giggling. Luckily, the noises were not very loud and the other performers and the audience could not hear them. I heard from some parents they thought the students were laughing because they were enjoying themselves; the parents had no idea it was anything different. The student actors did a great job continuing with their lines and singing and dancing despite the “oinking.” They showed a

lot of performance professionalism and maturity without having much experience on stage.

A parent mentioned not being able to hear the students. This is something we worked on as a theater skill, projecting our voices in order for all of the audience to hear every part of the performance. The volume was good from where I was sitting, but more time in the theater and with the CST program would have reduced this problem. The students demonstrated a measurable improvement in their performance volume from when they first started rehearsing in their classroom.

Costumes were an issue for the performers. They had not spent enough time rehearsing in their costumes to reduce nerves and enable them to relax a little more in costume while performing. Some of the costume pieces the students made broke and some of the pieces CST provided needed a lot of unexpected adjustments.

Performance Logistics

Having all four classes in the dressing room at the same time the day of the performance was too much and an unexpected challenge. During the dress rehearsal, the classes sat in the audience when they were not preparing or performing. They never sat in one group all together until they were smashed into the dressing room for over thirty minutes before the performance. I have experience directing shows with large groups of students but the amount of students I worked with at the former school was less per class. Although it was packed and hot, it became even more apparent the teachers and the CST professionals were dedicated to the students' success when everyone chipped in to keep the students calm and ready to perform.

The amount of parents able to attend the performance was lower than expected. It was said by teachers and parents that this might have been due to when they were informed of the date for the performance. This took a lot of discussion and comparison of calendars between CST and the school. By the time a date and time was agreed upon, we were already significantly engaged in the program. Unfortunately, this also meant performance notices to parents could not be sent out any sooner. It might have been a blessing in disguise that not all the parents were able to attend the show because it was not likely all parents from both grades could have fit in the audience; almost every seat was full as it was.

It was suggested that another performance, either in the evening or on a weekend during the day, be added but regrettably CST's theater schedule could not include any more performances. CST shares their theater space with kidsActing. Both groups have many performances and classes scheduled to use the stage on weekends and evenings because this is when most children are more available for participating in extracurricular activities. As much as each class and its final show are important, it would have taken cancelling already established performances such as the advanced musical group who have performances on the weekends from mid-February until Spring Break.

PROGRAM'S SUCCESSES- FUNDING

Program Free for UT Elementary

Rabkin and Redmond (2006) insist that "two decades of efforts to raise standards, focus schools on academic fundamentals, and close the achievement gap have steadily eroded the place of the arts in public education" (p. 60). Because schools are facing these

economic struggles, they are often not able to afford to pay for additional programs. CST offered this program to UT Elementary for free; otherwise I do not think they would have been able to participate.

Showcase Performance

It is important for all members of a learning community to recognize a project. CST achieved this by providing the students an opportunity for a culminating performance. To observe and commemorate “school & student achievement” (Rabkin & Redmond, 2006, p. 64), CST provided the whole theater experience including stage lights, full costumes, live music, and all of the professionals needed to make the theater function. This was provided free to UT Elementary because it is such an essential part of the students’ knowledge, experiencing arts integration and completing the performance process. This also fulfills CST’s mission to provide these opportunities for children.

The performance was a positive experience for the participants and audience according to post-program questionnaires. The students performed well despite their nerves and minor costume issues. The audience cheered loud and had nothing but nice things to say to me as they exited the theater. The audience reaction to the performance was a shock to most students because they had never performed for an audience of that size on a professional stage. They were very proud of themselves and pleased to have participated. This final experience enabled the students to take risks learning art disciplines many had no prior experience with and celebrate their hard work.

PROGRAM'S CHALLENGES- FUNDING

Lack of Funding

More trips to the theater were needed but would cost even more. CST offers this program without monetary contributions from UT Elementary, so transportation is limited. Buses are very expensive and the theater could only afford two trips. Funding is also required to provide costumes and materials for the costume pieces the students create and compensate technical professionals who run the theater during the performance including a light operator, costumer, accompanist, and stage manager. Part of this program's appeal is that it is free for schools, but CST has recognizable limitations that affected the quality of the final show. CST receives funding from private donors and grants, but the budget is stretched too thin and will not be able to offer this program for free to schools as time goes on.

Program Free for UT Elementary

Although mentioned above as a success, UT Elementary not contributing to this program is also a downfall. Without equal buy in by both groups, balanced ownership cannot be achieved; one is always more responsible. In this case, it was not as much of an issue because it was our first time working together. But if the program was to develop into a more collaborative venture, more planning and organization would need to take place, ultimately resulting in the need for increased funding.

Incentives

Panaritis (1995) proposes that "effective interdisciplinary programs usually find ways to motivate, acknowledge, and reward educators who voluntarily take on

challenging new responsibilities” (p. 623). I asked the teachers in their pre-program questionnaires what they would suggest as an incentive if I were to offer one or need to recruit more participants in the future. They said they did not need one because they were happy to be a part of the program and their students’ participation was their compensation. Because CST was taking on the majority of the planning, providing the program free to the school, and not requiring too much extra time from the teachers, incentives were not entirely necessary for the success of this particular program.

PROGRAM’S SUCCESSES- PARTICIPANTS

Me and CST

Being the Education Director of CST and a former teacher in public schools helped bring about the success of this program. I had the opportunity to improve on my skills as a teaching artist and the curriculum we offered UT Elementary because I had previous experience conducting a similar program at another school. This other school was also located in East Austin had a similar student demographic. The knowledge I gained during this previous experience made a significant difference in the refinement of the curriculum and the strategies I used to structure the material in-class and at the theater.

My experience as a classroom teacher and teaching artist in urban schools was helpful to the program’s success. I have training in the use of positive reinforcement as a behavior management tool and was able to lead the classes without too much disruption while making progress learning a large amount of information foreign to many of the students’ prior experience at school. The nature of the material required students to move

and be out of their seats, very unlike how they were used to behaving while in their classrooms. If I was unable to maintain control of the group while dancing around the room and singing with our loud “stage voices,” the quality of their performance would be poor and the school would not want CST to continue with the program. Although the teacher remained in the classroom during most sessions, I was not their teacher and following my directions when they know they are not getting a grade was an option they could have chosen. My training taught me to keep the material fast-paced, upbeat, introduced in small doses, and just above the students’ skill level enough to keep them interested.

Because CST is an established theatre program, we offered UT Elementary students knowledge and experiences they did not receive from their current set of courses. This enabled CST to fill a gap at the school because they do not have theatre or dance offered as elective/special area classes. According to questionnaire results, students liked the games we played. Their answers varied widely about which ones they remembered and liked best. They loved making their costume pieces, singing, and dancing. Most of their feedback was positive responses about a majority of the program. Surprisingly, one of the aspects they mentioned enjoying the most was using the unusual art materials when making their costume pieces: glitter glue, sheets of foam, shiny pipe cleaners, and animal print paper.

An advantage CST’s program was able to offer that all participants were excited about from the very beginning was the use of the stage and all of the benefits performing in a professional theatre facility students get to experience. The students were in awe

when they toured the space. They loved being backstage, in the dressing room, on stage, and watching in the audience. The students mentioned liking the CST staff, in particular, including the accompanist and the costumer. Being around the CST theater professionals and working in our theater building was a new experience the students enjoyed.

Strengths of UT Elementary

The reason for a school and community arts organization collaboration to be established might be a school's "unique strengths" and what it can provide to strengthen the relationship compared to an alternate institution (Massey, 2007, p.141). According to Rabkin and Redmond (2006) "The best programs do not look the same in every school, but reflect each school's particular strengths, interests, and available arts resources" (p. 64). This is an important aspect for a community arts group to consider when designing a proposal for a particular school. The choice for this research to be conducted at UT Elementary was a good fit. UT Elementary School is sponsored by the University of Texas and operates as an arm of the research institution. As a result, the students and staff were more comfortable with research being conducted on their campus and more willing to accept strangers in their classrooms. This school was also a good selection for this study because I felt a greater sense of wanting to learn from the students. The parents chose to have their students participate in a lottery in order to attend the school. The privilege of being selected to be a student at this school seems to create an overall sense of fortune, increasing student and parent involvement and dedication. Although the student demographic is low-socioeconomic, there is a more auspicious air about the school as compared to other urban campuses where I have worked. This resulted in

higher enthusiasm for the program and increased participation and anticipation in the performance.

UT Elementary Professionals

The support from the UT Elementary principal was apparent and indispensable from the beginning. He was very willing to meet and plan, eager to have his students involved in a theatre program, and enthusiastic to see the performance. He helped me develop the initial schedule, connect with the appropriate teachers, and establish a positive presence on the campus. Without his positive endorsement, CST would not have been able to collaborate and help provide this opportunity for the students. His presence at the theater and glowing compliments during the finale showcase made a very positive impact.

The UT Elementary teachers were very dedicated and essential to this program's success. They kept their students motivated and on task, which was not always the case at the other school that participated in this program previously. By staying in the classroom, even if they were not actively engaged with our lesson, the teacher's presence provided support and value to the material the students were learning. They were in the dressing room helping pass out costume pieces and in the audience cheering on their students. The teachers practiced with the students when I was not present. They provided space in their schedules and made their classroom available for an "outsider" to get their students all riled up, dancing and singing, and then leave them with hyper children. The teachers put their trust in me and CST. Their commitment to the program was vital to the quality of the finale showcase and the success of their students.

UT Elementary Students

The appeal of a performance in a theater led the majority of the students to be enthusiastic and willing to participate. Throughout in-class rehearsals, students expressed their excitement to visit and perform at the theater. They consistently communicated how nervous they were but with smiling and eager faces. Although their anxious jitters increased as the performance approached, they continued to rehearse with positive spirits. They were a great group to work with and their enthusiasm was infectious.

PROGRAM'S CHALLENGES- PARTICIPANTS

Rehearsal Space

Rehearsing in the classroom was very crowded. Students struggled by not having room to dance without running into each other and knocking into furniture. This caused behavior issues and reluctance for the students to participate with their full energy. Transitioning between rehearsal spaces was difficult, from the classroom to the cafeteria especially. When we attempted to move to the cafeteria in order to have more space to dance, the students were so lost. They forgot everything because of their disorientation and lack of reference points. It was as if the students had not learned anything and were starting from scratch. One attempt to practice in the cafeteria failed because the cleaning staff was still mopping the floors. The students' behavior going from one space to the other was also a struggle because they took advantage of their teacher's absence and it cut down in the amount of time we had to work because of the time needed to travel and correct behavior. Traveling thirty feet with twenty first graders takes more time than one would think. Due to the amount of professionals in attendance and the newness of the

space, the transition to the theater did not have the same amount of behavior issues. I did have to take time to re-teach nearly as much information.

Attempting to make costume pieces in the cafeteria was also not a good strategic move because there were no tables on which to work. The students were not used to working on the floor so it was difficult for them to draw or use scissors. I quickly learned this space was not adequate for our rehearsals after my experiences with the 1st graders, so the 2nd graders did not have to go through the same struggles.

UT Elementary will have an outside theater in two years. It would be ideal if the theatre production could stay in the same space for the entire program, rehearsal and performance. But it is very unlikely for additional school programs to never have to move, especially when it comes to larger spaces in a school needing to be used for so many students and activities. When it comes to a special space like the CST theater, the students cannot be in that space consistently due to travel time and money for transportation, so transitions need to be practiced. UT Elementary is a small school in size and area built from several portable buildings connected by decking. They are currently expanding their campus constructing new buildings that will contain larger common areas like a new cafeteria, office, and gymnasium. Until these larger facilities are built, everyone has to manage the best they can with the lack of space.

First Experience with this Program

On one of the questionnaires, a parent wanted more student involvement in the writing, composing, and producing of the show. Because this was the first experience CST staff, the teachers, and the students had collaborating together, utilizing established

songs and a familiar show worked better than if the students created all new material. For this program, I produced a list of options of songs and musicals for the teachers to choose from before the students knew the performance material. This way the teachers had a chance to consider interdisciplinary connections and recommend the content that could be integrated with the most ease and to create the most significance. If the students had chosen the songs for their performance instead, I do not know if they would have chosen differently because they seemed to enjoy learning *The Lion King*.

Although expanding the program and having the UT Elementary students create original material would be the ultimate goal for the program, I do not think they have enough experience at this point in the collaboration to write music, create an entirely new story, make costumes, rehearse, and produce a quality performance in the limited amount of time we had available. Taking on too much too quickly would have sacrificed the quality of the program and performance, thus decreasing the interest of the students and adults involved. Slowly expanding as we all gain experience working together is more ideal.

Lack of Enthusiasm of All Students

As an incentive for students to participate and stay motivated, I offered a CST scholarship to attend a kidsActing summer camp. These were designed to be awarded to students with good behavior and enthusiastic participation. The result of offering this incentive had little to no effect on the students' interest in the program or behavior during in-class rehearsals. This might have been because students were not familiar with what happens at a kidsActing camp and how much it is worth for a scholarship to be a

motivating factor. If they had, I believe more students would have made every effort to earn one. In the end, the students who were going to do well in the program did their best despite the incentive, and the few students who did not like singing and dancing still did not seem interested in doing so.

Communication and Feedback

RESOURCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Stankiewicz (2001) suggests communication between school personnel and the community arts organization staff builds trust. The stability of partnered arts integration projects can live or die depending on whether the participants' trust is built and sustained. This can be improved by including reflection, feedback, and evaluation as integral parts of communication (Panaritis, 1995). These steps are often given little attention or skipped over because of time constraints. Another line of communication often not given enough consideration is how these projects are advocated for and marketed in the community (Rabkin & Redmond, 2006). The greater awareness of these partnerships throughout a community, the more support and resources a program has the potential to acquire.

PROGRAM'S SUCCESSES

Building Trust and Respect

As CST's Education Director in charge of community outreach and the teaching artist directing the day-to-day operation of the in-school programs, I had a direct effect on the selection of which schools were offered a program proposal. CST became involved with UT Elementary because a former colleague was the Vice President of the Parent

Forum, their parent leadership group, and suggested there was a need at the school and the students and parents would enjoy very much what we had to offer. She helped me get in contact with the principal and was vital in establishing a trusting relationship with the administration. This connection was the key CST was missing in previous experiences with other schools where we were limited to offering after-school classes through their enrichment programs. It was harder to develop a lasting partnership with these previous schools because these after-school enrichment classes only occurred when the school staff were for the main part not present and CST was not involved with the recruitment of students. This affected the success of the programs to such a degree that we did not retain classes at most of the schools where we had no personal connection to a faculty member or parent. Without the fundamental relationship where trust was already established, I do not think CST would have initiated a program at UT Elementary School. Noel (2010) speaks to this:

Low-income neighborhoods are jaded by the comings and goings of organizations... These efforts take not only effort, but also simply time... communities ask that we be physically present in schools in order to learn, to show commitment, and to build trust with community members. (p. 5)

In order to establish familiarity and trust as an outsider coming into the UT Elementary community, I made it a point to be present in the hallways (UT Elementary does not have halls but the passageways between student areas), in order to get to know the office and custodial staff, and stop in to the after-school enrichment students' classrooms so that the teachers associated my face with the CST program. The more I was present, the more I felt trusted by the UT Elementary staff. The amount of students

waving and yelling “Miss Nina” as they walked back to their classrooms from lunch increased and a sense of belonging started to develop. Noel (2010) reveals “as partners spend time working together, and repeated collaborative activities have been effective, partners come to recognize that they have developed relationships based on shared goals, procedures, and beliefs” (p. 6). I hope to continue improving upon any appreciation and trust earned from this program as the arts integration partnership continues between CST and UT Elementary School.

Positive Teacher and Parent Feedback

Because it was hard for the teachers to give up their planning periods to meet, we relied heavily on communicating through email and discussing logistical details before and after I taught sessions in their classrooms. This was sufficient to organize this program at this level. I felt like the majority of the time we were all on the same page and all of the leadership was informed about what was to come.

The teachers had a number of suggestions to improve upon the program for the next semester but overall they had positive experiences. They had only good things to say about the finale performance and the students’ involvement. All the teachers wanted the collaboration to continue next year and felt it was a beneficial learning experience for everyone. The interviews were informative and a great way to continue getting feedback after the culmination of the program.

According to the post-program parent questionnaires, 100% thought the CST program was valuable to their child’s education. Nearly every one of the questionnaires indicated that parents enjoyed the performance and the comments about seeing their

children's smiles were especially pleasant to hear. This is a substantial result and overwhelming reason to continue this program and the collaboration at UT Elementary.

Student Focus Group

The small group discussion session was very informative. I interviewed this group of students only once after the program's conclusion so I do not think the feedback was sufficient to get the most accurate account of the students' experiences, but it was still helpful in understanding the student perspective. The finale performance was so fresh in their minds that I am uncertain whether they loved being participants throughout the entire collaboration but they definitely enjoyed the finale showcase.

PROGRAM'S CHALLENGES

Community Connections

Although the CST program at UT Elementary School was a positive experience for the majority of the participants, it is uncertain whether the community around the school, the theater, or even the city knows about the good work conducted between these institutions. CST needs to make all of its donors and the community aware of the arts integration project. They are "more likely to have more resources, time, and marketing expertise than schools to keep the case for the arts in front of the public" (Rademaker, 2003, p. 23). There were most likely faculty members, students, and parents not involved with the program that had no idea it was happening on their campus. Without increasing the amount of publicity for this arts integrated program, funding and other resources that

might have been available were not obtained or donated and the quality of the project might have been put at a disadvantage.

One way CST missed the opportunity to enlist greater advocacy for the arts integration program on the UT Elementary campus was by not employing the other arts instructors from the school to get involved or offer curricular suggestions to connect the programming with what the students were working on in all of their classes. By marketing the finale showcase to the whole school and around the community, it would have raised the awareness of this partnership and increased attendance.

Curriculum Connections

Although the program itself was an arts integrated project combining singing, dancing, performance, and visual arts, all integration opportunities were not taken advantage of throughout the CST program. During the post-program interviews, the teachers said they found connections when teaching the concepts of the animal kingdom and storytelling but were not able to spend very much time making more connections due to the amount of content required of them to deliver throughout the school year. As the director of this program and advocate of integrative learning, I should have presented more places where the teachers could have connected their established curricula with the themes found throughout *The Lion King*. Because this was a new partnership, the relationships with the teachers took time to establish. By the time we were all familiar with each other and what was being taught, the majority of the program's content was already determined.

According to Cole (2010), “a key component of supporting community-based classroom curriculum is implementing the support structures (discussions, activities, mentorships, individualized instruction) designed to help students make sense of their experiences in broader community contexts” (p. 24). These opportunities were not completely taken advantage of throughout this program. There are several places where other CST professionals as well as other artists in the East Austin community could have lent their expertise to support a day’s lesson. When the novelty I brought to the students’ day needed to be refreshed, these support structures could invigorate even more enthusiasm from the participants. I believe the development of these expansion opportunities could come with the progression of this program.

Communication with Teachers

One of the key components to success mentioned in almost every resource is communication, most often centering on planning. While the participating teachers and I met a couple of times to plan and discuss the progression of the program, we needed more opportunities to meet. More planning will always be an issue because of the lack of time the teachers have throughout the day to dedicate to planning for their own classes much less an extra program, but this was the missing link to making the partnership happen with even greater ease and success.

The pre-program questionnaires I gave to the participating teachers were not all returned. They were most likely misplaced due to how busy the teachers are as well as this paperwork not being a priority compared to what they have to prepare for their own classes. Although the teachers were very dedicated to the success of the program,

communication sometimes fell by the wayside. This was due primarily to the demands in all of our schedules not allowing for a good time to meet. Establishing set lines of communication or set times to discuss the program might have prevented these communication issues. Looking back, it would have been best to discuss the most productive method to gain feedback from the teachers before the program started and all agree to check in with each other a set amount of times through weekly emails or meetings pre-established on a calendar.

Along with adding pre-established communication times, having a written plan outlining the long-term structure of the program would have been helpful for everyone (Appel, 2006; Stankiewicz, 2001). My experience directing this program at another school would have helped me produce this plan. Although I was able to explain the basic sequence we would undertake, I did not have a document framing the plan in order for the teachers to communicate their feedback. More written documentation would have helped the process instead of relying only on discussion. Being able to see the plan, let it seep in, and refer back to it might have aided the teachers in giving feedback.

I would also have conducted interviews with the teachers as one of our first meetings instead of giving them a questionnaire. This would have enabled me to receive immediate feedback and spend more time getting to know each teacher one-on-one. I think the teachers would have been more comfortable with me and my abilities if we had discussed their answers to the questions and allowed me to share more about my experience as a teacher and teaching artist. This would also have enabled me to know

more about their experience as teachers, levels of comfort with each of the art disciplines we would be working with, and their feelings about how they teach their classroom.

According to feedback from the teachers, they say that the CST program overlapped too much with other performance expectations for their classes. At UT Elementary School, each grade-level is expected to perform at a monthly Parent Forum meeting annually. Each grade signs up at the beginning of the year for a particular month, with the majority of the grade-levels holding their performance during the same month from year-to-year. Therefore holiday themes or time of year remain the same so as to aid teachers with planning being able to use recurring themes and content. The music teacher participates in these showcases having the students sing songs or play instruments, but mostly it is the classroom teachers who provide the bulk of the performance content including songs, skits, dances, etc. To organize the Parent Forum show, as well as participate in the CST performance, puts a lot of pressure on the teachers, particularly in the 2nd grade whose show is very involved and elaborate and uses much class time to prepare.

If CST connected their program to the performances each grade already has to perform for the Parent Forum meetings, it would cut down on the pressure the teachers encounter and assist in providing more content and rehearsal time for these shows. It would increase the quality of these performances allowing for some professional assistance including more attention and money paid to costuming, the set, accompaniment, and the overall show. As CST continues to be a staple in the 1st and 2nd grade UT Elementary curriculum, the scheduling of the finale performances can be

established at the beginning of the year in order to allow for prime scheduling on both UT Elementary and CST's calendars and collaboration with their Parent Forum presentation.

On the first day of the CST program, many of the students had trouble reading the words to their songs. Because 1st and 2nd graders are too young to read the more advanced songs they would perform, it would have been better if I had gone over the words line-by-line first. In order to solve problems such as these, it would have been better if I had communicated with the teacher and shared my weekly lesson plan the day before their class. It would have served not only as a reminder I was teaching the next day but to get their feedback about the activities. Their opinions prior to teaching a certain activity might have prevented behavior issues and lessons not going as planned. This level of communication takes thorough planning on an outside organization's part in order to develop lesson plans with plenty of time to receive teacher feedback and adjust the lesson before the day it is presented to the students.

Communication with Parents

There was some negative feedback about the amount of communication we attempted in order to inform parents about CST and the program. Being an outsider to the school, I was not given access to communicate directly with the students' parents, but I was told the teachers sent emails announcing the performance dates, posted the information in the school calendar and monthly newsletter two months prior to the show, and sent reminder handouts in the students' Thursday folders, the communication system UT Elementary has established to send home and receive important paperwork. The teachers said that although they try to communicate with the parents using all of these

approaches, the quantity of parents who respond to the communication and return paperwork is low and did not significantly change when responding to information about the CST program. Their suggestion was to send out announcements sooner and more often to insure more parents were aware and could attend the finale performance.

Flexibility

RESOURCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Allow for Evolution

An arts integration program will “not look the same in every school, but reflect each school’s particular strengths, interests, and available resources” (Rabkin & Redmond, 2006, p. 64). Even if community arts organizations have had successful programs at other schools, additional programs will not happen identically from one year to the next or even between two groups at the same school. The literature suggests participants should always retain “logistical flexibility” (Cole, 2010, p. 23), “flexibility and patience” (Panaritis, 1995, p. 623), and “persistence” (Stankiewicz, 2001, p. 9). This notion is supported by Noel (2010):

As challenges inevitably occur when individuals and organizations that may be of a fundamentally different nature interact, a more authentic partnership can expect partners to be able to act with flexibility, to enact change when needed, and to incorporate new community needs and institutional demands. (p. 6)

PROGRAM’S SUCCESSES

Modifying Games and Lessons

There were several days when the students were not in the proper disposition to play particular games. For example, I walked in to teach one of the 1st grade classes and

they were in the midst of celebrating Valentine's Day, complete with snacks and crafts all over their tables. They had just passed out cards to each other and eaten some of their holiday candy when the teacher called for them to start cleaning up because I had arrived. Not only did the students not want to stop their party, but they had eaten too much sugar and were more hyperactive than normal. On the spot, I decided to play a quieter game than the one I had planned, which required the students to focus and stand still in order to do well.

There were also instances when I had to modify what we were working on because of the lack of space or an unexpected obstacle such as a new student or one of the featured students was absent. Movement is a large part of the activities planned as part of the CST program so there were several moments when too much was unsafe with so many students in such a small space. On the first day, the whole 1st grade met in one classroom. Instead of playing "What Time is it Mr. Fox?" the way I normally facilitate it, I had to make modifications for safety purposes. Instead of running to touch "base" to be safe from "the fox" (the leader of the game, in this case me), "the chickens" (the students) had to sit down in place as fast as they could. This modification worked great with large groups of students while maintaining the most essential parts of the game; the students acted out different actions and used their imaginations.

Natural Development of the Program

Panaritis (1995) suggests creating manageable objectives and not expecting to accomplish unreasonably lofty goals can decrease the amount of modifications required for success. If the leadership focuses on a more refined theme, a natural level of evolution

will rightly occur. When the 2nd graders met in their separate classes rather than the whole grade on the first day, it brought about better student focus and improved my ability to lead the group. We realized all of the goals the CST/UT Elementary integration program set out to complete, some with trials such as the rehearsals in the cafeteria and others that were brilliant like the finale performance. “Try not to hamstring your program with unrealistic time or overreaching promises or expectations” (Panaritis, 1995, p. 623), or the exceptional moments will not have the opportunity to transpire. It would have also been beneficial to allow time to “discuss, revise, and reflect on whatever you do – during and after implementation” with the teachers more thoroughly (Panaritis, 1995, p. 623).

PROGRAM’S CHALLENGES

Unexpected Classroom Surprises

There were several week-to-week daily surprises when arriving in each classroom, more at the beginning before the schedule had become a routine. These included classes having substitutes, changes in personnel, the addition of CST interns, classroom teachers leaving the classroom, teachers forgetting I was arriving, or other special activities scheduled that cut into CST program time. This tended to cause turmoil and some behavior issues. There was also the occasional surprise that one could not plan for like students leaving to go to the restroom, a student getting sick, needing a band-aid because of a scratch that reopened, or when something was spilled. For example, I walked into one of the 1st grade classes and, not only did they have a substitute, but had passed out snack and were starting to eat. Upon realizing it was time for the CST program, the substitute had the students pack up their snacks and come to the floor. This

caused the majority of the students to be very disappointed. Being told they had to put away their food was followed by expressions of moaning and groaning and an overall feeling of not wanting to participate by the class. This caused behavior interruptions throughout our session. With a transparent plan agreed on by all leaders and continual communication about necessary modifications, the teachers and I would have been able to solve problems before they occurred.

Technology Needs

There were a couple of incidents of technology surprises. This was partly due to not discussing that I needed this equipment with the teachers before the session. There were tribulations caused by bugs in the machinery. One example was when I showed the students the words to the songs for the first time. I assumed there would be an overhead projector available, but UT Elementary classrooms have white boards connected to computer systems and not the traditional overhead projector I was used to. There were also several problems when a radio malfunctioned or when I did not have the correct versions of a song on CD. These problems could have been solved with better preparation and communication on my part. If I had asked the teachers what would be the best way to present the words to the class and not assumed there would be particular equipment available, I would have been more prepared with the appropriate technology, the teachers could have assisted more, and issues avoided.

Change in Personnel

Changes to education personnel can cause major obstacles to the success of a community/school partnership. “Retaining core personnel” and having “shared

leadership” can mean the difference between success and failure (Stankiewicz, 2001, p. 9). When one of the 2nd grade teachers was hired as an administrator at a different school, I thought there was going to be major upheaval. He was the most dedicated to the program, as far as preparing his class in between sessions and the best communicator returning emails quickly and instigating discussions about the schedule. There was a short adjustment period for the students and some time spent with a substitute teacher who was fortunately an office employee familiar with and supportive of our program. Luckily, this teacher’s replacement was just as enthusiastic and willing to participate. This change could have made a big difference in this class’ success in the program, but it worked out nicely for everyone in the end.

Conclusion

My research focused on finding the most essential components of a successful collaboration between a community arts organization and a school in an urban community on an arts integrated program. I drew parallels between the project I directed at UT Elementary School and what the literature I researched suggests. The crucial elements I established were: (a) resources, (b) communication and feedback, and (c) flexibility. In order to succeed, these partnerships should utilize all of the resources possible in order to allow for maximum time to get to know each other’s strengths and gain trust, plan and prepare, and create a reliable schedule and structure. The collection of all resources available in the community and securing financial support is important along with recruiting the most committed leaders and enthusiastic student participants.

Utilizing these resources well involves consistent communication and constructive feedback permitting necessary reflection and evaluation, sustained trust for each other, and a clear plan for advocacy and marketing of the program. Without flexibility, a natural evolution of the arts integrated project cannot occur and necessary modifications cannot be dealt with in the most efficient manner. I encountered all of these aspects as a researcher and teaching artist representing CST during the program at UT Elementary. I feel we were successful in light of the program being a new collaboration, the lack of financial support and rehearsal space, not always having the best lines of communication, and facing unexpected challenges. All of these components require attention and can mean the difference between program success and failure.

In the following chapter, I conclude my research and summarize my results. I make recommendations for other community arts organizations looking into developing an arts integration program with an urban school and bring to a close my discussion of the first arts collaboration between CST and UT Elementary School.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Problem Statement

Working as an inexperienced teacher with a population of students who were mostly minority and lived in low-income homes, I struggled to motivate them to excel. As the economy gets weaker and more funds are appropriated for testing the basics rather than enriching for the greatest engagement in learning, I worry that this problem is only getting worse. The arts are one way to battle this issue. In the *Improving America's Schools Act of 1993* (1993),

Research has demonstrated that content-rich instruction is indispensable for all children, of every stage of development. Yet many children, particularly low-income and low-achieving children, fill out endless drill-and-practice worksheets while their more advantaged peers read novels, create stories, tackle multi-step math problems, and design and conduct science experiments. (p. Introduction- 2)

One solution for this disparity is arts integration programs, especially those conducted in conjunction with community arts organizations. Norman (2009) asserts, “Informal arts programs fill gaps in neighborhoods, schools, and communities where cosmopolitan culture and excess, collide with poverty, want, discrimination, and invisibility” (p. 62). This study focused on an upstart, integrative arts program in order to find the elements needed to conduct a successful collaboration between a community arts organization and a school in an urban neighborhood. Having been on both sides of this issue as a classroom teacher and a visiting teaching artist, I wanted to examine the recommendations available and compare how these components were manifested during the collaboration between CST and UT Elementary School.

The Study and Research Methodology

Norman (2009) affirms that “arts organizations and teaching artists play an important role in realizing well-rounded educational strategies, and they are at the forefront of providing arts instruction in many classrooms” (p. 62). I had the opportunity as a teaching artist and the Director of Education at Center Stage Texas to develop a new, arts integration program at UT Elementary School. The program consisted of two 1st grade and two 2nd grade classes and a total of 80 students. Each class danced to and sang a song from *The Lion King*, created original costume pieces, and performed on a professional stage. I studied the progression of the program, from the initial planning stages with the administration through to the finale performance. Collecting data using qualitative research methodology, I conducted interviews with and collected questionnaires from school leaders, teachers, students, and parents and kept a personal journal, recording my observations and opinions throughout the program. I analyzed the accumulated data along side of suggestions from reviewed literature to determine what constitutes successful arts collaborations. I then drew conclusions about how the participants in the CST/ UT Elementary arts integration program compared with these expert viewpoints, helping to determine qualities that will lead to a successful community arts partnership.

Major Findings

As a result of this study, I discovered there is no prescriptive answer to achieve success while conducting a collaborative arts project between a community arts

organization and a school, only significant recommendations to guide the development of a program. Resources, communication, and flexibility are the essential components of arts integration collaborations that require consideration to increase the likelihood for success. My recommendations in this chapter are written from the perspective of a community arts organization because, according to Cole (2010) and Strand (2006), more research from this viewpoint is needed.

RESOURCES

The amount of resources allocated for a project can be directly linked to the success or failure of arts integration collaborations. Panaritis (1995) warns that interdisciplinary programs can be “like seeds sown in the stones, ideas, however wonderful, will surely amount to little. They must be protected, nourished, and securely rooted in fertile ground” (p. 623). By aligning the resources important to the CST/UT Elementary program with the suggestions from researched literature, the amount of time utilized, financial support acquired, and participants committed made the most significant impact to the outcome of community/school arts collaborations.

Resources- Time

Know your Audience

From my experience as a student and teacher, many schools are familiar with having their students visit arts establishments in the community for cultural encounters such as an opera performance or a museum tour, but rarely do community arts organizations come to the school to teach in the classroom or alongside classroom

teachers. I believe it is up to community arts organizations to extend invitations to schools, become more familiar with how they operate, and gain knowledge about how they can support arts education on its campus. Without working together in our communities, more schools and arts organizations will fail, and many community arts organizations need to find ways to prevent this.

Norman (2009) affirms,

Our educational settings are diverse and complex places that lack continuity across them for a variety of reasons, but allowing an outside entity to become part of the school community through partnership is a process that requires time, patience, vision, and a willingness to resist the status quo in ways that open up access to resources and experiences for all. (p. 66)

Time has to be planned and spent getting to know the community in which an arts integration partnership operates. This involvement enables all parties to understand each other's needs and gain familiarity, not only to learn to trust and respect each other's roles in the project, but to understand what resources each group brings to the table. If the teaching artists who represent a community arts organization are on a school's campus as much as possible, then they can observe the participant students in their classes. Moreover, in doing so the teaching artists will get to know the participant teachers and become familiar with their instruction style, other community organizations and how they operate their programs at the school, and the daily operation of the all school staff and students in order to gauge how best to become a part of that environment before the program starts.

Schedule in Advance

Partnering organizations should schedule all of the most essential dates during the very first planning meetings. If the CST program had been an established staple of the curriculum in the 1st and 2nd grades at UT Elementary, it would have enabled the schedule to be announced sooner in the school year, given the parents more notice of their child's performance, and prevented overlap with other special programs. The earlier dates and times can be promoted for a culminating event of a collaborative program, the more potential there is to increase parent and community awareness and attendance. Of course, there is always the chance that modifications will need to be made. Preparing alternate dates in case of inclement weather or last minute conflicts would also be practical.

Over-prepare

New projects are more likely to progress more seamlessly if finished examples are shared with the participants prior to starting. Needs for reorganizing the classroom for optimum space including student and furniture placement or prior knowledge of concepts to be taught should be discussed in order to ensure all creative ventures are successful and time is conserved.

Even though we played games to understand the concepts of stage direction, next time I would use signs on the floor to reinforce these concepts. I consistently used this vocabulary when directing the students, but they needed visuals to assist them with discerning changes in the rehearsal environment. Using a consistent method for knowing where to enter and exit the stage would not only have helped the students have better behavior during space transitions, but would have saved time by not having to go over

these concepts every time we moved. I would also plan in advance for there to be tables available in any space where we were working on a visual art project. Although the UT Elementary office staff was very accommodating letting me reserve the cafeteria for rehearsal space, the classroom teachers needed to be involved in that process and attend practices with the class at least during the travel and the beginning of the session.

As an outside organization coming into a school, make sure to bring all essential supplies, including a way to store artwork in between sessions. Make prior arrangements with teachers to use classroom materials if they are needed, only if this was agreed upon before the start of the program so as to not cause surprise budget dilemmas. Label everything before arriving at a session, making sure participants' names are on all items. This will help program leaders and classroom teachers keep materials and projects organized and prevent misplacement, especially if anything needs to be transported to alternate exhibition locations.

Resources- Funding

Fill a Gap

Norman (2009) conveys that “schools are most likely to seek out partners to fill in gaps where they lack resource or expertise” (p. 66). In order to be of the most benefit and establish an effective arts partnership, a community arts organization should seek out schools that require the services they offer. It might be an excessive warning, but conflicts can be created if an organization competes with other curricula already established within the school, or community groups that are already operating programs during or after-school. Being familiar with all resources available to offer students can

assist an arts organization when attempting to develop a relationship with a school. CST was able to provide a theater space for UT Elementary as well as in-class performance training to the 1st and 2nd grade students. Because each grade already had established performance obligations, CST could have utilized its resources to find alternate ways to supply these classes with arts support rather than only providing a comprehensive, theatre program. This action might have helped the students create costumes, build more elaborate sets, or other theatre-specific projects linked to their Parent Forum presentations. A community arts organization does not have to fund whole programs. Finding ways to reach out and fulfill other resource needs might be more realistic to accomplish, yet be still helpful.

Equal Financial Responsibility

CST provided this arts integration program to UT Elementary without requesting compensation. This made the relationship more one-sided in curriculum development and program responsibility. This is not the ideal situation for a partnership and might not be possible for all community arts organizations to afford. Striving for a division of funding support would help to create a more democratic approach and increase all participants' abilities to affect success.

Community arts organizations need to consider cutbacks in school funding and how this affects whether or not a school can take part in collaborations. Uncovering ways for both institutions to assist in financial responsibility should be determined from the beginning, possibly incorporating ways to adjust the proportion of how much each partner provides throughout time. A community arts organization also should avoid being

perceived as a handout and prevent adding to the problem of “low-income neighborhoods [being] jaded by the comings and goings of organizations” (Noel, 2010, p. 5). A solution could be to offer programs without cost to schools for the first collaborative effort as partners. This would enable a relationship between the institutions to develop and give the arts organization the opportunity to prove its worth for the students’ education. After a relationship is established, being transparent about costs could open all participants’ eyes to share funding and encourage the program leaders to recruit parents and other UT Elementary staff to assist in raising money. They can aid in more financial support being acquired by uncovering grants, obtaining private donors, and involving students in fundraising. Student participants could learn a valuable lesson by performing within the community to earn money at events sponsored by the community arts organization, the school, or both, while gaining more performance experience and raising awareness and money for the program.

Another solution might be for a community arts organization to provide their services at a reduced price for schools that have some but not all necessary resources; like UT Elementary having a stage but not a theatre program. In particular, the CST board of directors’ mission is to provide children without the financial means to experience a real theater in person, but CST could work to bring as much of that experience as possible to the schools instead of only transporting them to the theater. kidsActing has traveling light packs and curtains and many of the professionals travel to other locations in the city to teach other classes. CST could take advantage of these resource potentials in order to expand the program without adding too much strain on either institution’s budget.

Provide Incentives

If this partnership grows and the amount of potential interdisciplinary opportunities are expanded, finding a way to “help motivate, acknowledge, and reward those who volunteer” their time and expertise will assist the program’s success (Panaritis, 1995, p. 623). The UT Elementary teachers did not need an incentive at this level of participation but might be needed and appreciated as more is expected from them. Panaritis (1995) contends,

Incentives lets teachers know that their participation in the interdisciplinary initiative will not be taken for granted, shows that the school’s commitment to support the program is genuine, and makes it significantly easier for rank-and-file teachers to believe. (p. 623)

When an outside organization asks in-school professionals to do more work as part of a new collaborative program, finding ways to reward their efforts is important. Whether by awarding time, money, space, or even choice, recognition of participant’s endeavors will ensure a greater desire to be a part of the program.

Even student participants may be provided incentives. CST can have the students make a list of their favorite musicals or pick their top choices from a pre-established list. By having the teachers choose what to work on from the top choices, everyone is provided a voice in the choice of subject matter. That way the students feel included in the decision process resulting in more attachment to the material they are learning (Rademaker, 2003; Stankiewicz, 2001). Providing other opportunities like scholarships for summer camps or tickets to shows at the theater could also be used as incentives for students. Next time, I would use the cafeteria rehearsal time as an incentive and clear progression towards the performance in the theater making it more of a reward. Instead of

just being in the cafeteria, being in a “new” space would add to the significance, perhaps help tame behavior, and assist in focusing student learning.

Culminating Event

Appel (2006) agrees that by “enabling participants to demonstrate what they have learned about the arts in a very real and meaningful way” (p. 16), an arts integration program finale exhibition “provides a sense of closure and brings together parents and others in the school community in celebration of achievement” (p. 17). As an outside group not able to give grades, it provided a constant motivating factor and another variety of an incentive for students to work hard.

The finale performance offered by CST was an experience not often had by most young children; the UT Elementary 1st and 2nd graders worked with professional theatre artists including a costumer, an accompanist, a stage manager, a light operator, as well as a director. Finding a unique contribution to a student’s education is an approach community arts organizations can use to appeal to a school’s desire to collaborate.

It is important to include all parents in the celebration of their children’s achievements to insure the continuation of their support. If they are denied this opportunity, they would no longer want the school to maintain their relationship with an outside organization. Despite being held during the work day and without a considerable amount of notice, fortunately, enough parents were able to attend the CST/UT Elementary final performance and were very happy with the results.

Resources- Participants

Worthy Match

Community arts organizations should pre-interview schools in order to find the best match. Besides being able to fulfill a need, having a personal connection at a school can aid in establishing a relationship and trust for an outside partner. Rabkin & Redmond (2009) convey how “allowing outside organizations and individuals to gain access to institutions in a more evenhanded way and create long-term relationships that reinforce the idea of education as a community-centered effort is a little new for schools” (p. 62). The creation of a working relationship can be fragile and takes complementary personalities as well as corresponding needs. It is important to gain an understanding from early discussions with the administration whether you need to have teachers volunteer or students sign-up. Negative attitudes about participating can be harmful and damage the partnership before it gets off the ground. Learn about each other before committing to a long-term project.

Experience is Key

The more experience everyone has, the more refined a collaborative arts program can become. If the students had more time in their costumes before the show and more practice performing with the lights, the music, and a live audience, it would have made a big difference on how mishaps affected their performance. To gain more experience and alleviate issues next time, I would not wait until the dress rehearsal to have the students practice in their costumes. Instead, I would bring all of the costume pieces to the school

for fittings and have class rehearsals in full-costume in order to make sure everything is adjusted and attached well.

Having conducted a similar program at a different school helped me as the director modify and manage the theatre experience for the students at UT Elementary. Modifications will always need to be made whether it is because a program is with a different group of people and personalities or because a student gets sick at the last minute and the show must go on. But having experience, a practice run if you will, is invaluable for a community arts group when organizing an integrative project.

The students learned from watching the other classes practice on stage during the dress rehearsal, yet it was way too much time for a six-year-old to sit through three groups rehearsing on stage before it was their turn. Fidgeting, talking, and misbehavior could be prevented by separating the groups. To solve this problem, a teacher-recommended change the next time we conducted this program with UT Elementary School would be to make a day of the students' first theater experience. I would have the students arrive early in the morning and each class would move through different stations to work on elements of their performance. This would include areas for trying on costumes, singing through the music, rehearsing spacing and cues with lights on the stage, and practicing the dances. The students could have lunch at the theater and then participate in a full run-through of the performance. The show on the next day would ensure the material stayed fresh in their minds. This proposed schedule would only need two days of transportation, so the cost for buses would not increase. Maximizing the

amount of experience the students, teachers, and theatre professionals have working on the performance will relieve nerves and help improve the quality of the show.

Dedicated Leaders

The CST/UT Elementary arts integration program flourished because of the faithful support of the teachers and administration. Providing for the appropriate leadership, the principal proposed the 1st and 2nd grade teachers participate. They were on board from the start and supported me the whole time, whether making behavior corrections or organizing their students at the theater. The principal was a significant advocate whose support made the difference between whether the program succeeded or not. Every adult involved in this collaboration helped make it possible. Norman (2009) recommends “when partnerships involve classroom teachers, professional teaching artists, community members, and cultural and educational institutions, learning outcomes can improve, and the experience can become more pronounced for everyone involved” (p. 66).

Integration Director

Stankiewicz (2001) advocates “having persons fully employed by the two institutions share leadership... was crucial to the success of the partnership” (p. 6). If funding could be allocated to employ a teaching artist or teacher strictly to facilitate the arts interdisciplinary program across all grades and disciplines, it would be most ideal for the integration of the program at UT Elementary. As a position on the school’s campus, this instructor would be responsible for uniting CST’s curricula with the content utilized

in current classrooms, developing the TEKS (statewide mandated learning objectives) for all subjects into clear and original projects. This could be developed into a handbook with collaborative teaching opportunities composed as multiple progressions within a student's education while at the school supported by a series of performances that build on each experience. Not only would a resource like this be beneficial for all organizations involved in the program, but could be utilized by other community arts organization interested in collaborating with a school. If this position cannot be realized, having a CST teaching artist on campus more often would provide for more opportunities to contribute to planning for the integration of the arts into more subjects, developing, collaborating, and teaching cooperative lessons, and helping to organize more celebratory, culminating events. This would demonstrate to financial sponsors, the community, and all participants that these learning connections are meaningful, not just as arts experiences, but imperative to the whole child's learning. This may lead to obtaining more funding, community support, and more schools wanting to have this program on their campus.

Amount of Participants

Community arts organizations need to know they have funds, space, materials, etc. for the appropriate amount of participants involved in a program. Consider the amount of resources needed during the planning stage before recruiting in order to not stretch supplies too thin and retain a quality program. I should have made sure to get a percentage of expected attendees from the teachers and principal before the final performance dates were established. If we were to conduct this program again, I would

increase the amount of material each class performs in order to perform two separate shows, one for the 1st graders and one for the 2nd graders.

Gear to Participant Strengths

An arts partnership needs to consider the strengths of each participant in order to utilize all their resources adequately throughout a collaborative program. This could mean using equipment from one partner and the art supplies from another, the student participants from one and the instructors from the other, or the facilities from one and the lesson plans from the other. This will change from relationship to relationship, even from year to year, depending on the students who are participating or whether the same teachers or teaching artists return. This could also mean how the initial program is organized meaning how much content is covered one year versus a smaller amount with more featured parts the next. This will likely change, depending on the age of the students, the number of programs a community arts organization has collaborated on, or even the amount of enthusiasm for the content. It is important to gear the program to the highest possible quality of outcome, weighing all factors and accentuating the positive.

COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK

Make Connections

Rabkin and Redmond (2009) suggest for “the best programs [to] engage artists, arts specialists, and teachers from all disciplines in serious inquiry about making powerful pedagogical and curricular links between the arts and other subjects” (p. 64). Integrating the curriculum across all disciplines and levels will communicate solidarity

among the teachers in a school and the teaching artists of a community arts organization to the program participants and the community. From my experience, the more a theme or project is emphasized in every class a student attends throughout a school day, the more meaning it will hold and impact it will make on their learning. During an interdisciplinary project I taught at another school I had a student tell me, “Whoa! My English teacher said the same thing last period. You mean you talk to her?” I thought that was significant not only because the student showed awareness that their teachers communicate with each other but was able to recognize the connection between the two subjects and the lessons being taught. Norman (2009) confirms that “formal instruction in the arts, integrated with core-subject instruction shows students that knowledge is transferable and applicable to multiple situations” (p. 66). According to Massey (2007), if these integration opportunities are taken advantage of correctly, it could strengthen the relationship between partnering institutions and boost a program to another level.

Becoming accustomed with the grade-levels’ curricula and testing standards will help facilitate connections and align instruction for the least amount of overlap with the program’s lesson expectations. If CST’s theatre arts integrated program was adopted as a fundamental component in UT Elementary classes, it would not be an extra item on the daily agenda and could assist with congestion in the daily learning schedule. For example, a script-writing unit could be cooperatively taught in a 4th grade language arts class or a unit on measurement, where students measure pieces for their set design or costumes, taught in a 2nd grade math class. “The value of arts integration lies in its great potential to help learners experience learning as a holistic endeavor that connects their

personal feelings with intellectual and physical skill development and helps them anticipate learning challenges with joy” (Strand, 2006, p. 39). Not only would integration potentially add “joy” to the students’ learning day but also reduce stress on the teachers’ schedule by including additional professionals and resources as a part of their classroom instruction. Exceptionally said by DaVinci, as quoted in Appel (2006), “as every divided kingdom falls, so every mind divided between many studies confounds and saps itself” (p. 17).

Feedback Throughout

Secure feedback from all participants at each stage of an arts collaboration. This will enable consistent reflection and needed medications for success. I should have conducted more individual interviews and held more, small group discussions with the student focus group before the program started, during its development, and after the final performance in order to obtain a more thorough depiction of the participants’ perspectives. It would have been significant to compare the experiences between 1st grade and 2nd grade students, so I recommend interviewing a small, focus group from all of the grade-levels involved. Make sure questionnaires and surveys collect specific information about each member’s experience during an arts integration project as well as comparisons to other community arts organizations’ programs to obtain a complete picture of the program and promote the necessary revisions for an improved partnership.

Schedule Communication

Schedule time for communication with all participants before instruction in a collaborative program starts including announcements, meetings, culminating events,

interviews, group discussions, and written feedback. If communication had been scheduled to run each daily lesson by the teachers for their feedback before I taught each weekly session, it likely would have prevented some of the unexpected issues that occurred. The teachers know their students best, so each lesson could have been improved upon if they had seen what was planned ahead of time instead relying on experimenting to see what would work and what would not as the program progressed. Providing the classroom teachers with a comprehensive set of lesson plans taught at the previous school from the onset would have allowed them to provide feedback about their specific students' needs. Feedback from after reviewing prior arts integration programs would have helped me to organize a more accurate calendar and tailor the weekly lessons to the UT Elementary student participants. Early communication to agree on a detailed, long-term plan, including specific dates and project content, helps alleviate miscommunication and stress due to time constraints and other school commitments (Appel, 2006).

Advertise for Awareness

Take advantage of all opportunities to publicize an arts integrated program. This visibility helps to maximize awareness of the program within the community, possibly resulting in increased resources for the program. Any prospects of support that might be available for the collaboration to obtain need to be made aware of the project's existence through marketing. More communication about a community partnership at a school can only bring more support and contribute to the quality and success of the project.

If the 1st and 2nd grade students are given more chances to showcase their skills performing small pieces of the program at a presentation for the other grades in the

school, parent forum meetings, or other large, school functions, this would not only market the upcoming show and expand their performance experience but increase awareness and resource opportunities. After reflecting on parent and teacher feedback, for the next project I would increase the publicity of the students' performance around the UT Elementary campus, the CST theater, and at local public gathering places. It would also be beneficial to inform the local news organizations of the performance, including TV stations and newspapers, because they are likely to assist in advertising the event.

FLEXIBILITY

Plan for Modifications

Community arts organizations can reduce the amount of content or collaboration in other classes for the first experience with a program and expand with experience. This expansion and reduction of a collaborative arts program's content can be planned ahead of time: "The structure [of the program] needs to only serve as the framework for modifying the scope of the project as time goes on" (Norman, 2009, p. 66). As this arts integration program becomes more established at UT Elementary and the participants' theatre experience develops, the students' involvement in all aspects of the show can increase along with the opportunities for them to work on the production in all of their classes: "Long-term, creative, and collaborative relationships between schools and arts organizations... allow artists and educators to follow the benefits of arts activities on students' development over time" (Norman, 2009, p. 66). Not only can this program take on a more interdisciplinary approach as it grows and the relationship between the school and CST blossoms, but it can follow the students throughout their early education career,

building on knowledge and assisting the school in connecting learning from grade-to-grade. Developing the arts partnership in this way will involve more resources but can be planned in advance and sponsors recruited as the expansion progresses.

Room for Personalization

Allow room in an arts integration program's curriculum for unique additions and ways to personalize content to reflect the participant's personalities and communities. Catering to their needs and connecting to their lives in a personal way will assist an outside organization to create an atmosphere of trust and strengthen the artistic relationship. As the program at UT Elementary continues to progress, making each show more original will be the next logical step. I have already had discussions with the administrators and teachers about the following semester's performance content. I proposed taking a familiar show like *The Wizard of Oz* and having the students modify the story to include elements from East Austin, making it more unique and personal within the community.

Expect the Unexpected

During this process, "don't be surprised when things go wrong, conflicts emerge, and everyone's stamina and patience are put to the test – especially at first. Challenges take time, and important ones take even longer" (Panaritis, 1995, p. 623). No matter how much preparation and planning is done, just as anything in life, the program will not always happen just right. Working with children always adds another level of surprise. Go with the flow and allow unexpected challenges to become enjoyable learning experiences for the participants as well as the leaders.

Recommendations for Future Research

After completing this program and studying the current literature, it is worthwhile for schools and community arts organizations to consider “how arts partnerships can contribute to building a democratic learning community in which students, teachers, cultural workers, and artists are able to redefine their roles and obtain an alternative sense of community by expanding boundaries and definitions” (Rabkin & Redmond, 2009, p. 62). More research in this field needs to be done to fully understand all of the perspectives of arts collaborations as well as the circumstances which enable them to thrive. These study prospects could include more case studies of successful and unsuccessful arts integration partnerships or comparisons between how a collaborative community program transpires when conducted at more than one school when given equivalent resources. Another worthy research opportunity would be to use quantitative methodology to measure affects of arts integration programs on attendance, test scores, and, if expanded over a long period of time, graduation rates. Research to benefit community arts organizations might be measuring whether participating in arts partnerships increases financial support, patrons including audience membership or participation in arts classes, recruitment of other teaching artists and community leaders to leadership boards, or the awareness of the organization throughout the community. Evaluating whether reaching out to community members increases awareness by obtaining additional resources, recruiting community sponsors such as a dry cleaning establishment to help with costuming or a local bakery to help with concessions at a performance, allowing these businesses to offer coupons or goods during a finale

showcase to increase their business. Does increasing participation in community celebrations such as parades or festivals enlist more community support or positively affect the partnership?

Conclusions

Although demanding, expanding arts experiences at schools and throughout communities is valuable for children in many ways. Appel (2006) confirms the “arts cultivate the cognitive and behavioral skills necessary for success in any part of the K-12 curriculum, in the postsecondary environment, and in the workplace” (p. 15). It benefits a community to connect its arts organizations with the local schools, hopefully expanding these connections to local businesses and beyond. It is in a school’s advantage to allow partners to aid in providing resources that enhance education opportunities. The arts collaboration between CST and UT Elementary was successful according to participant feedback and will grow if the characteristics assembled in this study are utilized. The more established a community partnership becomes, the more impact it may have to bolster the community in which it resides.

This research can benefit other community arts organizations by identifying genuine starting points for the organization of a proposal for a collaborative project with a school. Arts institutions like theaters, museums, galleries, or arts schools have the opportunity to expand their patrons, sponsors, and arts ventures by involving a school and all of the individuals associated with it: the students, their parents, the staff, their families, and extended families and friends in the surrounding area. When arts organizations join

forces with schools for enrichment projects, it increases the number of individuals accessible to participate, professionals who are able to support with additional instruction, resources available, and advocates such as the parents and other adults connected to the school community who will cheer on their children as spectators and sponsors. This study's results can be used to develop a proposal for a project with a school that not only emphasizes the arts but approaches a collaboration using an interdisciplinary method will unlock more possibilities for connections and resources. Panaritis (1995) promotes these projects as,

admittedly demanding, and never to be taken for granted, the interdisciplinary model is still the most powerful and appropriate way to reconstruct our classrooms. With proper support, training, and professional commitment, it is definitely a risk worth taking. (p. 623)

From a nonprofit theater perspective, these community relationships can create more recognition of its business and open doors to local resources. CST is in constant need of volunteers or to employ reliable and affordable, skilled professionals. Hiring local community members and parents of CST students would expand the organization's support group while increasing the quality of the facility. People with specialized training could contribute to the theater's needs with carpentry or landscaping labor, office work or building maintenance, proficiency in sewing or costume maintenance, or assistance at events with catering, set-up, or clean-up. If CST connects more background-screened adults to its mission and community, it can only help keep the local children engaged and increase participation in the arts enrichment programs. More awareness would also enhance the likelihood of professional sponsorship for current programs or help fund new

programming as more local businesses become conscious of the need and the joy CST brings to students' lives.

Another suggestion for community arts organizations to increase collaboration opportunities with schools is to create work-study programs for high school students. Programs such as this would allow students to gain professional training. At a theater, for example, they could learn aspects of the theatre business while earning fine arts credit to fulfill their high school graduation requirements. This would enable more at-risk students the opportunity to stay in school while securing income and graduate at the same time. A work-study program at CST could consist of, but is not limited to, training in box office administration, light design and board operation, stage management, set design and construction, costume design, prop management, and office management. As well as offering more instruction in acting, dancing, singing, script writing, directing, and producing a show, students would be giving back to their community while developing knowledge as a skilled, employable worker.

A community arts organization could also offer programs to connect local art professionals and teaching artists as mentors to at-risk students. This could be another way to ensure more impact on the success of the community and its residents. There are trained adults, including musicians, visual artists, and theater technicians, as just a few examples, who would donate their time and expertise to children in-need for an hour a week, if asked. Making these opportunities available through partnerships between arts organizations and schools can only strengthen the local community and increase support for arts programming at these institutions.

From the perspective of these communities, the increase in the success of arts partnerships between urban schools and community arts organizations can create worthwhile opportunities and spark affirmative change to areas in need. Norman (2009) corroborates,

Sharing artistic endeavors with others helps youth and adults experience positive affirmation and recognition. This can be a significant for people who see little value in their lives, and have received messages from society which end up in reinforcing anonymity and failure. (p. 66)

If the researched recommendations are applied to other institutional art alliances, I believe it can influence more than just the lives of the participants. If it is not only left up to classroom “teachers to go into the community, meeting and partnering with community members and agencies, to learn about the important community strengths that can then be utilized in a more culturally relevant education” (Noel, 2010, p. 1), the potential for a greater impact on impoverished neighborhoods can be realized. This study and others like it are intended to generate a greater interest in community arts organization collaborations with schools, thus benefitting the students, their communities, and the field of art education now and for generations to come.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

EXAMPLE OF PRE-PROGRAM TEACHER INTERVIEW

The purpose of my first interview is to understand the teacher's philosophy of teaching and their stance on interdisciplinary learning. I want to be familiar with the major units they teach throughout the semester and would like to know if they have lessons they think have the arts integrated and developed well versus which they would like to expand. I would also like to know about their students their level of art exposure. I would conduct this as an informal discussion with the following questions as guidelines:

1. How long have you been a teacher? How long have you been a teacher at UT Elementary? How long have you been teaching this grade?
2. What kind of arts classes do your students participate in on a regular basis? Has your students gotten to experience any special art programs that you can recall in the past?
3. Does your philosophy on teaching include teaching with an interdisciplinary approach by integrating multiple subjects into one unit? If yes, please explain. If no, please explain.
4. What is your favorite unit to teach throughout the year and why? Least favorite and why?
5. Do you have any units or lessons that you think are good examples of how you use an interdisciplinary approach with the arts or integrating different subjects? Please describe.
6. Do you have any lessons or units that you feel are in need of being developed into a more interdisciplinary arts experience? Please describe.
7. Do you participate in any artistic realms outside school as a hobby or interest? Which ones and how are you involved? Have you in the past?
8. Do you feel like your knowledge level of a particular art field stops you or motivates you to use it in your teaching?

9. As a teacher, have you participated in additional programs in the past? If yes, what was your experience like? If no, have you heard anything good or bad about other teachers' experiences?
10. Would an incentive motivate you to have good feelings about participating in an extra program? What kind of incentives would interest you?

Appendix B

EXAMPLE OF POST-PROGRAM TEACHER INTERVIEW, STUDENT & PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Post-program Teacher Interview:

1. Were you pleased with the level of learning your students displayed in their finale performances? If so, please list an example that was at or above your expectations. If not, please list an example where the student did not reach the level you would have liked.
2. Do you think integrating art in this lesson helped to motivate your students more than in past experiences with this unit? Why or why not?
3. Was there a part of this project you would have done different in hindsight and if so what?
4. If you could repeat this program with another unit, what would you choose to integrate with the arts?
5. What did you think of your overall experience with Center Stage Texas' Arts Enrichment Program and do you think their involvement was necessary for your success?

Post-program Student Questionnaire:

1. Did you enjoy your experience with this project and CST? Yes, No, I don't know
2. What was your favorite part about this project?
3. What was your least favorite part about this project?
4. Did your finale performance live up to your expectations? Yes, No, I don't know
5. Do you think you worked harder on this project than others that didn't have a finale showcase? Yes, No, I don't know
6. Would you want to do a project like this again? Yes, No, I don't know
7. What subject do you think would be more fun if it was mixed with the arts?

Post-program Parent Questionnaire:

1. Do you think your child enjoyed their experience? Yes, No, I don't know
2. Do you think they were motivated to learn more because of the addition of the arts? Yes, No, I don't know Why or why not?

3. Did you enjoy their finale showcase? Yes, No, I don't know
4. What was your favorite part about the performance?
5. Is this collaboration with Center Stage Texas valuable for your child's education?
Yes, No, I don't know
6. What would you change or add to this program?

Appendix C

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Study Title: Collaborating and Integrating the Arts in Schools: A Case Study of Center Stage Texas

Principal Researcher: Nina Sloan, Masters Candidate in Arts Education, (512) 771-3635, *nina.sloan@live.com*

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Paul Bolin, Art Education Graduate Advisor, University of Texas at Austin, (512) 471-5343, *pebolin@mail.utexas.edu*

INTRODUCTION

Your child is invited to participate in a research study of an art project between Center Stage Texas (CST) and the 2nd grade classes at the University of Texas Elementary. Your son/daughter is being asked to participate because he/she is a 2nd grader and will be a member of the team of students participating in a grade-level finale performance.

This permission form will give you the information you will need to understand why this study is being done and why your child is being invited to participate. It will also describe what your child will be asked to do to participate and any known risks or inconveniences that your child may have while participating. We encourage you to take some time to think this over and to discuss it with your child. We also encourage you to ask questions now and at any time. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form, your child will be asked to sign the form, and it will be a record of your permission to allow your child to participate. You will also be given a copy of this form.

I am a certified art teacher with the state of Texas as well as the Education Director and Teacher of arts programs at CST, a non-profit theater for children interested in bringing more arts opportunities to children in east Austin and creating a community of young people in the arts. I am excited to work with the professionals and students at UT Elementary and to work together on this art project.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?

The purpose of this research study is to understand the needed components of a collaborative project between a community arts program and a school. I will be writing a master's thesis that describes CST, the community arts program, and the project we work on with UT Elementary. My goal is to add arts elements to a unit 2nd grade teachers already work on with their students to heighten their learning experience and create greater motivation to participate and succeed.

WHAT ARE THE STUDY PROCEDURES? WHAT WILL MY CHILD BE ASKED TO DO?

If you give permission for your child to take part in this study, he/she will be asked to work as a team to create a finale performance around a theme decided upon between the CST

artist-educator and their teachers. The project will consist of rehearsing parts of scripts, songs, and dances from Broadway shows or original pieces the students develop, creating costume pieces and parts of background scenery, and working with props to produce an exciting show. The students will be asked to audition for solo parts if they choose or be a part of the chorus.

Throughout the project, I will be observing the students as they complete each stage of the project and conducting questionnaires in the middle and after the finale performance. They will be asked whether they are enjoying the additional arts elements and what they think of the project.

The students will be rehearsing and creating their show in class with their teacher and the student researcher/artist educator as facilitators for 30 minutes per week dedicated to specific work on this project. Their teacher has the discretion to spend any additional time to work on project elements that coincide with their school work when the student researcher is not present. We are planning to hold the final rehearsals and performances at CST, 2826 Real Street, Austin, TX, 78722. The students will travel to the theater on 3 different field trips: one two-hour technical rehearsal to understand the space and props, one 2-hour dress rehearsal to rehearse the show with costumes and lights, and the finale performance. Each student will be traveling on these field trips during school. Just as any field trip, the established school procedures will be followed by their homeroom teachers to conduct this event and the completion of parent permission forms will be required for each student. CST will continue to offer after-school enrichment for all UT Elementary students that enjoy their arts experience and all will be invited to participate.

Permission to contact any individual students after the study is completed can only be granted through the school administration and parent consent prior to contact.

Because this project will be conducted as an in-class project, the students will not be asked to participate in anything unapproved by their homeroom teacher. All elements of the project will only be made in conjunction with expectations to be graded by their teacher.

Parents will be invited to chaperone final rehearsals at the theater and to the finale performance. A questionnaire will be given to the parents at the conclusion of the finale performance to obtain their thoughts and feelings about the program.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OR INCONVENIENCES OF THE STUDY?

We believe there are no known risks to your child because of his/her participation in the research study; however, a possible inconvenience may be whether parents can attend the finale showcase. We will work with the teachers and the schools administration to find the most convenient time and date for everyone to participate in and enjoy the performance.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE STUDY?

Your child will benefit from this study by having added resources in their classroom including supplies, artist educator and funding. Each student will gain arts knowledge in the performing and visual arts as part of their regular classroom learning. These added arts components will hopefully motivate students and create a heightened atmosphere of fun in their classrooms. Depending on the success of this project, CST plans for this to be an on-going program offered at UT Elementary at no cost to the students or school. It will include potential use of the theater, all after-school arts enrichment programs, and in-school arts integration for all future UT kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade Elementary students.

WILL MY CHILD RECEIVE PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION? ARE THERE COSTS TO PARTICIPATE?

There are not costs to you and your child for participating in this study and your child will not be paid to participate in this study.

HOW WILL MY CHILD'S INFORMATION BE PROTECTED?

No photos or videos directly related to this study will be turned in to the university as a part of my master's thesis. Photos and videos will be taken of rehearsals and finale performances as documentation for the theater but not released to the public without a release form signed by you. The theatre will only use this media to market the theater and substantiate its programs to financial supporters. Students' names will never be included with any photos or videos. At the conclusion of this study, the researcher may publish their findings, but the information will be presented in summary format and your child will not be identified in any publications or presentations.

The data resulting from you and your child's participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not detailed within this consent form. In these cases, the data will contain no identifying information that could associate you with it, or with your participation in any study.

The records of this study will be stored securely and kept confidential. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin and members of the Institutional Review Board have the legal right to review these research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to identify you or your child as a subject. Throughout the study, the researchers will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.

CAN MY CHILD STOP BEING IN THE STUDY AND WHAT ARE MY AND MY CHILD’S RIGHTS?

Your child does not have to be in this study if you do not want him/her to participate. If you give permission for your child to be in the study, but later change your mind, you may withdraw your child at any time. There are no penalties or consequences of any kind if you decide that you do not want your child to participate. Your child does not have to answer any question that he/she does not want to answer. The questionnaire will consist of yes-no-maybe answers or simple fill-in-the-blanks. The only way your child may be withdrawn from the study would be normal conditions for withdrawal from class by their homeroom teacher like non-adherence to procedures or disruptive behavior.

WHOM DO I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY?

We will be happy to answer any question you have about this study. If you have questions later, want additional information, or wish to withdraw your child’s participation call the student researcher, Nina Sloan, at (512)771-3635. If you have questions about your child’s rights as a research participant, complaints, concerns, or questions about the research please contact Jody Jensen, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (512) 232-2685 or the Office of Research Support at (512) 471-8871.or email: orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Documentation of Permission:

I have read this form and decided that I will give permission for my child to participate in the study described above. Its general purposes, the particulars of my child’s involvement and possible risks and inconveniences have been explained to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw my child at any time. My signature also indicates that I have received a copy of this parental permission form. Please return this form to your child’s homeroom teacher.

Child Signature:

Print Name:

Date:

Parent/Guardian Signature:

Print Name:

Date:

Relationship to Child (e.g. mother, father, guardian): _____

Signature of Person
Obtaining Consent

Print Name:

Date:

Appendix D

LETTER FROM UT ELEMENTARY FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



September 1, 2010

To Whom It May Concern:

Please accept this letter of support for an IRB-approved research project to be conducted by Ms. Nina Sloan with the student of the University of Texas Elementary School. We are committed to providing Ms. Sloan the facilities and human support needed to conduct her research and to coordinate communications with parents of involved students in order for Ms. Sloan to adequately explain the research and seek informed consent. Pedagogically, we are excited about Ms. Sloan's research in fine arts as a means of furthering the academic, social, and cultural development of our students.

Should you have additional questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the school at 495-9705.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Kramer, Ph.D.
Principal, UT Elementary

Appendix E

LETTER FROM CENTER STAGE TEXAS FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



October 1, 2010

To Whom It May Concern:

Please accept this letter of support for an IRB-approved research project to be conducted by Ms. Christina Sloan. She is a teacher with Center Stage Texas and will be conducting this research in conjunction with our programming as an in-school arts enrichment teaching artist for 1st and 2nd grade classes at the University of Texas Elementary School. We are committed to providing the resources needed for her to conduct this program in its entirety. Ms. Sloan's research is in line with the mission of our nonprofit organization and we are excited that it will assist in expanding our arts enrichment programming to more students in East Austin.

If you need to contact us with any additional questions or concerns, please call (512) 391-1800 or email info@centerstagetexas.com.

Sincerely,



Sidney Pan,

Development Coordinator, Center Stage Texas

Appendix F

TRANSCRIPT OF THE POST-PROGRAM STUDENT FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

QUESTION 1: What did you think when I first came to start the program?

Student 2: I thought it would be scary.

Student 1: I thought it was something new.

Student 3: I thought, “Who’s this?” and “What are we doing?”

Student 4: I thought, “Why is she here?”

QUESTION 2: What did you think after we started?

Student 1: It was a new experience and it was fun after a while.

Student 4: I thought it was fun.

Student 3: I was excited.

Student 2: It’s awesome.

QUESTION 3: What did you think on stage for the finale performance?

Student 4: I felt really nervous.

Student 1: I felt like I was going to throw up and scared.

Student 3: I got some stage fright.

Student 2: Scary.

QUESTION 4: What did you do to help these feelings?

Student 1: Breathe.

Student 2: I looked at my mom and dad.

Student 4: I remembered it was my first play. QUESTION: How did that help you? I saw everyone wasn’t laughing and at the end they would just clap.

Student 3: I conquered my stage fright. I thought about after this is gonna be a calm day and to relax and have a good time.

QUESTION 5: What did you learn from doing this program?

Student 1: How fun it was to do an extra play.

Student 4: To use your big voice.

Student 2: I knew it was gonna be fine and nobody would make fun or be mean.

Student 3: I knew they would be funny and do a very well performance.

QUESTION 6: If we were to do this program again, what would you like to do or learn different than this year?

Student 1: I would like to do Beauty and the Beast because the play is well written and like to do the play and see how it feels to do Beauty and the Beast.

Student 2: I would be scared and shy. But I would do whatever you say and pick for me.

Student 4: I would just do it for fun and do as many as I can to make my mom proud. The play I wanna do is Sleeping Beauty.

Student 3: I am going to do the play the Lightening Thief this summer at kidsActing and I would like to be Percy Jackson or Luke. Luke is the guy who leads Capture the Flag. He leads the red, I think. QUESTION: Why did you decide to do another class like this? Because I am into Greek Mythology and I'm sort of addicted to swords and armor. It has a lot of sword fights and sword play that I would really like to learn. If you came back next year, I would like to learn the play Judy Blume or Rexerella, a story made up.

QUESTION 7: Compared to regular classes, what did you like or dislike about the program?

Student 1: I like this program because you got to sing, dance, and act. If I was here over the summer and do a play with you, I would definitely do it because it is really fun to act. Acting is my life and one day I want to be acting star on Broadway. It was a lot of fun because math and reading are boring.

Student 4: I liked that everyone was nice and didn't be mean. QUESTION: Like who? You, the costume people, Miss Karie. We get to have fun and everyone is calm.

Student 2: When you came, I got a surprise. It was scary when we did stuff; some of it. And also when you came we didn't have to do math or science with you. We didn't even have to read for Ms. Miles.

Student 3: I liked it about the same. I liked that I have read the book, Lion King. It's all fun to me, but not really science.

QUESTION 8: If next year you learned math or science but still performed like this year, what would you think?

Student 1: I would do it because it would really be fun to do something like that. It would make that stuff funner to do it. It's much funner because I don't like sitting a long time for something like saying long sentences when you could learn it and dance.

Student 4: It would be fun still, probably much funner.

Student 3: It would be like a song about math and science but with a dance and stuff? That's good for learning math and science.

Student 2: Next year we could try doing a dance with math and science and put it all together.

QUESTION 9: What do you think if you would have gotten a grade?

Student 2: Oh, gosh! No way!

Student 3: I would have gotten an A+. It helped me earn towards a scholarship because I think I earn more money at the end of the year.

Student 4: I'd try to do my hardest work and focus on everything you taught us because I try to get good grades as I can so my dad can give us money for good grades to save for college.

QUESTION 10: Is there anything else you would like to share?

Student 4: I will keep acting until I get older and probably have a job there. I just want to have fun and work with kids. I would let them choose and see what gets the most votes.

Student 3: It was really fun and I want to grow up to be an actor or famous. I want to get a scholarship for acting, work at a theater, and be on T.V.

Student 2: When I'm in college, I'm going to do a job like you like teaching how to dance and do a song like *Hakuna Matata* and work at the same job as you and have fun stuff.

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Vita

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This thesis was typed by Christina Sloan.